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**A STUDY OF THE EARLY RENAISSANCE
SIBYL CYCLES IN THE ART OF
NORTHERN AND CENTRAL ITALY**

IN 3 VOLUMES

VOLUME I

Reba Ann Gibb

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Renaissance Studies**

**University of Warwick,
Centre for the Study of the Renaissance**

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Sources: A. E. Baconsky, *Botticelli*, trans. by Andrea Gheorghitoiu,
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INCLUSION OF MATERIAL FROM A PRIOR DISSERTATION

This thesis is my own work. It contains material from a dissertation presented as part of the examination for the degree of Master of Arts of Warwick University, entitled, *The Floor of Siena Cathedral as a Renaissance Document*. That material is only the recording of the Latin text to be found on the floor, and the initial idea that the panels may have been placed on the floor in the wrong order. The detailed explication of that has been revised so thoroughly in this thesis, with the addition of much extra manuscript and early printed works, as to constitute new material. My researches for this thesis have been in much greater depth and detail than those within the time and scope of the MA. That has caused me to revise my views as to what happened at Siena and what its antecedents were, so radically that what is expressed in this thesis differs substantially from that in the earlier essay. At that time, I accepted the general published critical view that the floor was influenced by Belcari's Mystery Play. The scale of the MA essay did not permit me to explore the question of restorations and authenticity at all, and only to mention the name, role and title of Aringhieri. I did present a chronological account of the construction of the floor for the MA essay, but

that has been extensively revised in the light of further reading in the library and archives at Siena.

SUMMARY

This dissertation is about the historical origins, inception and development of the genre of pictorial Sibyl cycles in Northern and Central Italy, in the Early Renaissance. Previous published scholarship¹ listed twenty-two sites. I now know of forty. Twenty-three of these may be considered Early Renaissance works of art and are the subject of this study.

This study is not primarily engaged with History of Art but with the History of Ideas. That is, it is not a study of the painters, their methods and status but rather with the study of the development of the genre, its textual sources, the content of the inscribed oracles, the development of the pictorial conventions and symbolism, the transmission of these and the cultural significance of the genre. The dissertation is concerned with artistic styles and techniques only in so far as they illuminate the pictorial origin of the works and their iconographic significance in terms of the ideas conveyed. It describes and defines regional sub-genres, each with clear rules and conventions. These have not previously been identified and no comprehensive national conspectus exists.

Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is in three parts. The first part addresses the nature and origin of Sibyls (who and what they were) and their significance in cultural history until the Renaissance. Part Two is concerned with the origins and transmission of text and iconographic conventions in the Renaissance Sibyl cycles. Part three is a catalogue and survey of each Sibyl cycle site in Central and Northern Italy, along with a comprehensive photographic record. Great destruction of some cycles has taken place since the 1960s and the compilation of a complete photographic record is urgent and a significant aim of the present work. There are few published coloured photographs of the full cycles, none complete except for Siena.²

This dissertation is wide in scope and is in large part a catalogue and survey of all known Italian Sibyl cycles. Because of the limitations of a Doctoral dissertation, at times the transition from one site to another may appear abrupt and disjunct. Nonetheless, the structure is logical and careful. Sites are arranged chronologically, according to genre. The reader is directed to the detailed table of contents, if a review of structure and order be required.

Research Method

The method of research was to form a comprehensive list of Sibyl sites in Italy by consulting published English and Continental books, journals and locally produced historical papers as well as word of mouth advice in Italy. I visited all the sites and made a photographic record. Origin and transmission of text was established by consulting contemporary manuscripts that either specify the oracle text or describe the original Orsini, and other, frescos. These manuscripts are widely scattered in Europe and difficult of access so, where possible, a significant example of each kind of manuscript is reproduced in photographs or photocopy, transcribed and translated in the Appendices to the dissertation.

¹ The most comprehensive list is by De Clercq, 'Quelques series de Sibylles hors d'Italie' *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome* LI, 1981 (pp. 111-116). This list includes Italian sites as well as those in the rest of Europe. De Clercq, whose catalogue is the most exhaustive, lists 22 Italian sites where there are Sibyls. I now know of more than forty.

² There are only two Early Renaissance sites remaining unvisited where it has not been possible to gain access to Churches permanently closed.

ABBREVIATIONS

b.	born
c.	circa
d.	died
ed.	editor
f., ff.	and following
<i>F. Gr. Hist.</i>	F. Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1926-58)
fl.	floruit
fr., frs.	fragment, fragments
inf.	Infra
l., ll.	line, lines
n.	note
n.d.	no date
<i>N.T.</i>	New Testament
<i>O.T.</i>	Old Testament
repr.	reprint
v., vv.	verse, verses

PREFACE

Approach to the reader

Writing about an interdisciplinary research topic has peculiar stylistic problems. Good writing results from having a clear idea of who it is for whom the writing is intended, and thus a clear understanding of what level of specialist knowledge can be assumed, and therefore left unstated, in the body of the work.³

Therein lies the problem in an interdisciplinary research topic. This dissertation has immediate relevance to Architecture, Social and Cultural History, History of Art, Iconography, History of Ideas, Church History, Classics, Theology, Literature and Theatre Studies. The primary aim and duty of any academic writing, indeed of any writing, is to be comprehensible. It is not reasonable to expect the Theatre Studies specialist necessarily to have a ready command of Latin and Latin literature these days, nor the Iconographer to recall immediately who Lactantius was, when he lived and what were the social constraints and purposes which drove his writing. I therefore must translate and explain things, which to the Classicist, Theologian or Historian might seem so obvious as not to need exposition. I have tried to write in a way that is accessible and clear to readers in a number of disciplines whilst remaining securely grounded in the History of Ideas and the transmission of iconography.

³ A thesis may be written for one's self (narcissistic); the examiner (pragmatic) or to make some kind of useful contribution to knowledge and write for the community interested in the Renaissance at a specialist level of enquiry (idealistic). The writer is well past adolescence so cannot enter enthusiastically into narcissism. Considering the vast amount of labour, life and time involved in any serious academic work, she has either too much or too little ambition to write for the examiner only. Although aware that full many a thesis is born to blush unseen, she nonetheless must hope for a slightly wider readership than one, in order to find point in the effort. Too old for the first motive, too hopeful for the second, she is forced to idealism by default.

I can only therefore, ask for the patience of the readers if at times it strikes them that I state the obvious or the commonplace within their own specialist field. I do hope, of course, that the study will penetrate below the surface of each contingent discipline. The degree of depth will vary, according to the centrality of the particular discipline to the topic of the thesis.

I shall assume therefore, throughout this study that I write for the intelligent mind with a serious and developed interest in the Renaissance, but which may lack, at the time of reading, particular specialist information concerning Sibyls. I have taken the view that it is better to opt for clarity, coherence and the convenience of the reader even at the risk of occasionally appearing pedestrian to the specialist in a particular field.

What the dissertation is concerned to explore:

This study seeks to understand what ideas motivated the Humanists and their patrons. Why was it so important to portray the ten or twelve pagan Sibyls and their vaticinations in numerous and widespread sites all over Northern and Central Italy at that particular point in its cultural history?

In what ways this dissertation is original:

1. The discovery that fifteenth-century painted Sibyl Cycles all over Northern and Central Italy, independently of political boundaries and allegiances, share the selection and attribution of Latin Sibylline oracles in minute detail, and that the two sculpted Sibyl cycles share another, different, source text, Lactantius.⁴
2. Identifying and describing clear regional artistic modes within the fifteenth-century genre of Sibyl Cycles. There are five sub-genres, not before identified and having a clear chronological sequence.

⁴ Of the thirteen fifteenth-century painted Sibyl Cycles with legible text remaining that I have seen throughout the whole of Northern Italy, only four have very minor departures from this list (six out of the sixty remaining Sibyls) and these can largely be accounted for in terms of scribal error.

3. Finding Sibyl sites not previously the object of significant scholarly attention from the point of view of their text and iconography: adding to de Clercq's list of Sibyl Cycles in Europe.
4. Providing a near-complete photographic record of the development of the genre in fifteenth-century Northern Italy, far more extensive than is now held by any of the institutes of advanced research.⁵ The pictorial record is complete as regards all known fifteenth-century sites in Central and Northern Italy with the exception of only two churches which are kept permanently closed by the authorities: Bagolino: Chiesa di San Rocco, 1486 and Bizzozzero, Chiesa di Santo Stefano, 1498. At the time of writing, permission for entry has not yet been gained.
5. **Exploring the impact of cheap printed pictures:** how the new technology of print enabled the dissemination of an exact visual image, and of how that affected the iconography of important and permanent works of art in sculpture and painting.
6. Finding and translating rare and local Renaissance and contemporary manuscripts and printed texts not easily available to English-speaking scholars.
7. **The discovery of two 'new' sculptural works, one a Sibyl, by Giovanni Pisano, not previously identified as part of his oeuvre.** Whilst initial scholarly reception of photographic and other evidence has been very positively received, the discovery is

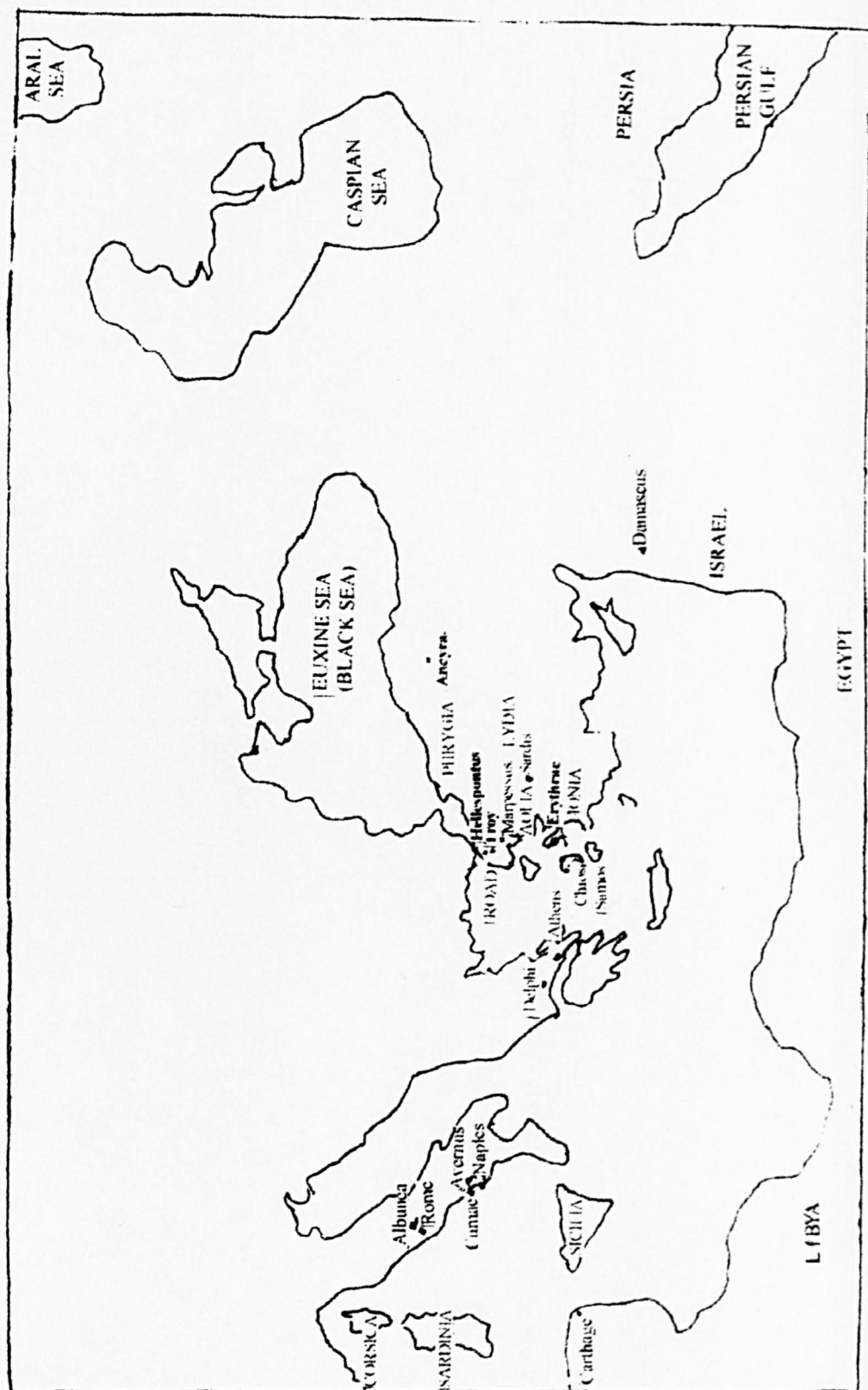
⁵ Terrible destruction of Sibyl cycles has taken place since the 1960s. A palace has been demolished which contained the first example of the genre modelled on the Roman original. A parish church has placed a vile rough concrete staircase across another fresco, keying this deeply into the wall then recently bolstering the remaining flaking plaster with arbitrary concrete patches, seemingly applied with a shovel, obscuring and irretrievably destroying large portions of what remains. There are no photographs or drawings of the original state. It is essential that a photographic and written record of the present state of the cycles be made and kept. Although the difficulties in terms of time, cost and travel are very great, compiling as complete a record as possible of the genre's initial phase of development in the fifteenth century is a major aim of this study.

so recent that it has not yet been formally ratified. I have therefore included this material in [REDACTED]

VOLUME I:

PART I: THE ORIGINS AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF SIBYLS BEFORE THE RENAISSANCE

THE SIBYLS' REPUTED PLACES OF ORIGIN



CHAPTER I: THE CLASSICAL ORIGINS OF THE SIBYLS

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GREEK ORIGINS AND THE SIBYLLINE BOOKS

It may be argued that a thorough investigation of the Greek origins of the Sibyls is not necessary in a study of a Renaissance work. Would it not be simpler and more relevant to concentrate on Latin culture's understanding of Sibyls, given that knowledge of Greek was not widespread in the early part of the Renaissance?

There are two reasons for undertaking this study of the early Greek Sibyls. After the Council of Ferrara–Florence and the advent of Bessarion and the Greek scholars from the Eastern Church in the 1430s, it is not safe to assume an ignorance of particular aspects of Greek culture, language and texts among intellectuals in the region. The provincial and monastic libraries in the area have not all been thoroughly catalogued. Many more Greek texts may yet be discovered. Secondly, if this study were to ignore or minimise the origins of Sibyls and their cults, there would be a logical incompleteness, a sense of an edifice without foundations. However, once a brief survey of the primary texts mentioning the first Sibyls and Sibylline shrines in the Archaic and Classical periods has been undertaken, there is a basis of understanding with which to evaluate later texts. It is also true to say that once some wider knowledge of classical texts has been established, what we find on the Cathedral floor at Siena for example, may itself be an indication of what texts were available to Renaissance scholars. This may be a more fruitful method than studying the floor with a preconceived notion of a limited list of texts believed to be in the possession of the scholars and artists who designed it.

I am also attempting, in this chapter, to make a thorough chronological account of the order in which particular Sibyls were first mentioned, because we can often be more sure of that date, than we can be about a Classical author's opinion as to when a shrine was founded.

as for example, '*She has spoken for a thousand years*,'⁶ in the absence of archaeological evidence. That is not to say I do not attend to strong internal evidence as to date. For example the whole point of the story of '*the Sibyl summoned from Ephesus*', is that she speaks to Cyrus and Croesus, King of Lydia.⁷ If one grants any historical credibility to the account, the event is datable to Sardis after the conquest of Lydia by Cyrus. This internal evidence provides a date a hundred years before the text was written by Xanthus of Lydia in the mid fifth century. Vaguer assertions, such as, '*The Sibyl is a thousand years old*' I have understood differently, as outlined below, and the date of the record is noted, not the supposed date of the Sibyl's birth.

THE SIBYLLINE BOOKS

Heraclitus and the ancient writers on the Sibyls had before them, as we have not, many written collections of the Sibylline Oracles. These must have been rather like the Jewish assemblage of aphorisms and prophetic sayings, probably also put together in the sixth century, in the *Book of Proverbs*, a collection of texts spanning a very great period of time. These *Sibylline Books*, written collections of the Sibyl's sayings assembled at various shrines, are now lost to us; no text survives. They were burned in the fire that destroyed the Capitol in 83 BC.

The remaining collection, called the *Sibylline Books*, is a palimpsest, impossible to edit with any certainty. It is a collection of Sibylline oracles preserved after the fire and after the final order, given by the Christian Emperor, Honorius (395-423), to destroy the Capitol's re-assembled collection of Sibylline books

There was another body of Sibylline Oracles, largely composed between c. 150 BC and 250 A.D, by prestigious Jewish scholars. These oracles were poems written to promulgate the Jewish faith, in the manner of late Sibylline oracles, i.e. in hexameters in the

⁶ Heraclitus, reported in Plutarch *Moralia* 397A.

⁷ Nicolaus of Damascus, *F. Gr. Hist.* 90 f. 68,8.

form of acrostics. Jews had such a reverence for their prophets that they expected Romans to feel the same about their own. Writing in the literary form associated with those prophets was thought to confer an authoritative status to the material. There were also some Christian writers who adopted the form. There was no attempt at deception; just as a modern writer adopting the sonnet form is not attempting to pass off his poem as a Renaissance piece. Later compilers however, mistook these poems for ancient works.

The extant collection was put together in the sixth century AD by a Byzantine scholar, attempting to assemble all the extant Sibylline texts. These cannot be used with any certainty however, to gain access to the original style or content of Sibylline utterance.

THE GREEK SIBYLLINE TRADITION

The Early Sibyls

Sibyls were a surprising phenomenon: women seers, regarded with a mixture of fear and respect in an ancient and latterly deeply patriarchal society. Their origins are so remote that details, personal or other, are irretrievably lost to us. Heraclitus, the earliest writer to mention the Sibyl, assumes that there was an individual called Sibyl, whose prophecies had unusual percipience and that she thus became famous.⁸ Later, the term became generic. Much later, Sibylline prophecies were preserved in written form, and named for the place from whence they were said to originate: 'the Erythraean Sibyl', 'the Marpessan Sibyl' and so on. The most primitive theory as to how prophecies originated in scattered locations was that she was a widely travelled woman!⁹

⁸ Many Classical writers are cited in this chapter, many of them are unfamiliar to the non-specialist. The reader's attention is directed to Appendix 1, where there is a full chronological list of Classical and Early Christian writers who make mention of Sibyls, together with dates and brief notes on each of them and the printed sources where other works may be found.

⁹ See H. W. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity*, ed. By B. C. McGuig (London: Routledge, 1985), p. 23

Sibyls held a place in Classical culture much like that of the male Hebrew prophets in Israel and Judea. In Greek Asia Minor, they were granted more power than men in their particular avocation of seers. Their very femaleness seems to have given them a perceived relationship with the irrational, or a supposed infra- or supra-rational perception of the darker forces threatening the individual and his culture. In Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, the Furies are, as female figures, far more convincing as harbingers of guilt and fear, epitomising distorted and enraged maternal potency, than, for example, a dramatised band of angry warriors might be.

A prevalent view is that Sibylline cults may be derived from the older Greek chthonic matriarchal religion, probably practised before the massive immigration, about 2000 BC, of peoples who spoke a language something like Greek and probably originated in the Eurasian Steppes, and who brought with them the sky god, Zeus.¹⁰

Before their advent, the old female earth goddesses, thirsty for blood, were worshipped or appeased in declivities or caves in the earth by the aboriginal inhabitants of the Greek peninsula. The earth goddesses were almost a parody of the obverse of maternal love, ever angry and potentially destructive, appeased by male child-sacrifice. At the end of the *Oresteia*, Athena, the goddess of Wisdom, advises that these Earth deities, the Erinyes, harbingers of guilt and concomitant fear, be recognised again and given the attention and propitiatory offerings due to them as a force to be reckoned with, or harmony and peace, both individual and social, cannot be achieved.

¹⁰ Michael Grant in *Greeks* (London: Nelson, 1958), p. 11, points out that both these early Greek peoples and those further round the Aegean to the east, the people of the Hittian state that dominated the Anatolian plateau before the Indo-European Hittites conquered it, show strong features in common with the culture of the early peoples of Germany. This suggests a long migration both in distance and time, of a people with shared art and craft forms and very similar polytheism. This migration brought with it the worship of the Sky Gods, Zeus and his pantheon, which can be seen to have a close parallel in the German pagan pantheon.

As H. W. Parke points out, Sibyls always, as one of the earliest writers on the topic claims, ‘*lack charm*,’ being hostile and confrontational.¹¹ They characteristically abuse and blame their listeners. Virgil’s late ‘Messianic’ *Eclogue* is unusual and remarkable for reversing the expected form, using Sibylline diction to predict a new and *happy* age, which explains its adoption by the Christians as a prophecy of the new age established with the coming of Christ.¹²

The Sibyls claim great age (consonant with a derivation from an older religion). Their shrines are often associated with caves and natural declivities. These shrines in Archaic and early Classical times were not commonly dedicated to Apollo, as were so many oracular shrines, but more often to Hera, the chief *female* deity.

The particular branch of polytheism with which Sibyls are associated.

From the available evidence it seems on balance probable that the old earth-goddess religion, to an extent suppressed with the conquered tribes, continued to exist among peoples on the margin of the Greek world in Asia Minor.¹³ The following is an account of what circumstantial evidence exists.

Sibyls in early times were always devotees of Hera, the ancient female earth-mother goddess, not Apollo, the Sun / Sky god. The earliest personal name for the Sibyl is,

¹¹ Heraclitus as recorded in Plutarch and translated by Parke. See H. W. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity*, ed. by B. C. McGing (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 63.

¹² *Eclogue* IV lines 4-10.

¹³ It is likely, especially if the ceremonies had to be covert, literally ‘underground’, that the Ancient Sibyl, the wise woman in her cave, represented an expression of that religion. The matters connected with the inception of Sibyls are so very remote in time that hard evidence is inevitably scant in an age before the inception of writing. However, it is unsatisfactory to offer no hypothesis whatever as to their origin on the basis of what evidence there is, circumstantial though it be.

‘Herophile’, ‘Beloved of Hera’. This is consonant with the pre-migration origin of the Hera cult.

Hera is in essence a goddess of female sexuality and passions, but, interestingly, she is only rarely invoked or portrayed as a mother, holding a child, or having to do with children. She frequently pursued the children of Zeus by other women, killing them or hounding them to destruction with fanatical, jealous and hungry fury, as a punishment of their mother’s wrongdoing. It is easy to see potential re-mythologizing of an earlier religion and rites of child sacrifice. (Euripides, when he invents a Sibyl, makes her the daughter of the nightmare child-killer and abductress, Lamia.)¹⁴

Most scholars conservatively assert that the Sibyl is at least Archaic. If one takes the oral tradition’s natural mode to be symbolic, the assertion made by Heraclitus that the Sibyl is a thousand years old takes us back well before the Trojan War, even though the round figure of, ‘a thousand years’, simply symbolises time out of mind. The main point is that even in Archaic times the Sibyl cult was perceived as very old.

Certainly by early Classical times, Western Greece, of which the Argolid was a part, saw the Sky god, Apollo, as the god of prophetic utterance, with the male Bacis as the Western equivalent of a Sibyl. The evidence suggests that Eastern Greece in Archaic and Heroic times remained far more faithful to the traditions and rites of the old female, chthonic gods, with concomitant child sacrifice.

Many scholars view Cassandra as the proto-Sibyl.¹⁵ Classical writers suggest that Homer borrowed verses from Sibylline prophecy. Modern scholars interpret the evidence conversely, that the birth of Sibylline prophecy is after Homer and quoting from him, and place the inception of a widely recognised Sibyl as not before 600 BC as a *terminus post*

¹⁴ See Euripides’ Satyr play, *Busiris*, Nauck, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragments* (2nd Edn, 1889), p. 506. See also Parke p 122-3 n9. See also below p. 147.

¹⁵ See Parke, pp. 16, 20n 13, 68nn 11, 13; 75, 76, 79, 127.

quem.¹⁶ That does not mean however, that there could be no surviving matriarchal worship and proto-Sibylline shrines long before that date. Whatever is correct, the literary themes in the *Iliad*, whose source is certainly eastern Greece, can be seen to reflect many of the aspects of the old earth mother religion and the history of its suppression.

The *Iliad* mirrors a religious history in which there was no place for the old earth-goddesses. Athena and Hera are pre-Hellenic goddesses, Aphrodite is Hellenic. In 'the Judgement of Paris' myth, the cause of the whole Trojan war, Paris, Prince of Troy, when asked which of the three is more beautiful, chooses the Hellenic Aphrodite over the more ancient goddesses. Hera's unappeasable anger is seen throughout the *Iliad*.

Hera, whom we have seen as a representative of the old female religion, is the implacable enemy of the Trojans. No Sibyls are mentioned in Homer. However, Apollodorus of Erythrae records of the local Erythraean Sibyl that, '*She prophesied to the Greeks when they were on their way to Ilion, that Troy would fall and that Homer would write falsehoods.*'¹⁷ Whether or not this comment that Homer lied is a 'prophetic' utterance in fact written *post hoc*, I think it is likely to have been made in relation to the attitudes of the goddesses and the religion as practised in Eastern Greece and the attitude of the patron goddess.

It is now thought that the Trojans themselves spoke a form of Greek, so the Trojan War was more of a fight between cousins than strangers. There were two major temples of Hera in the Greek world. One was in the West at a sanctuary between Argos and Mycenae, the other at Samos. Samos, like Troy, is in the linguistic and geographical area of Eastern Greece. It was more likely to identify with Troy in any struggle against the Greeks of Mycenae and Argos. In a war, the gods are often perceived as having favoured the victors.

¹⁶ Parke, p. 55.

¹⁷ See F. Jacoby *F. Gr. Hist.* (Leiden: Brill 1926-58), p. 422.

At one level, the Trojan war might be perceived as a struggle which determined which side was more favoured by the patron goddess, a perception not absent from modern wars.

Samos was said to be the birthplace of Hera. Erythrae and Marpessus were likely to see themselves as Hera's true and faithful adherents. Ionians would find it intolerable to believe that their patron Goddess, Hera, was implacably against them, as Homer asserts.¹⁸ No scholar I know of has attempted to identify what were those, '*falsehoods*', but it is easy to read local outrage against Homer.¹⁹ Apollodorus may have seen him as a famous (but disloyal?) son of compatriot soil. Erythrae and Samos may have seen themselves as more authentic upholders of the ancient earth goddess religion, epitomised by Hera.

As we have seen, the earliest personal name bestowed on the Sibyl was 'Herophile', 'Beloved of Hera', a name that reflects the close association between the worship of Hera and the nature and function of the Sibyl. Hera was the goddess and the Sibyl was her prophet, Samos her chosen land.²⁰

What were the names of the early Sibyls and where were their shrines?

This section summarises the recorded presence of Sibyls in *Magna Graecia* and gives a hypothetical explanation of their origins and the scattered locations of their shrines.

As we have seen, the original Sibyl dates from the Archaic Period, or probably even before that time. At that time reference is only made to 'Sibylla', one individual, perhaps as a

¹⁸ An early interpretation of the *Iliad* might easily have seemed, to a seventh or sixth-century listener, partially an account of Mycenaean versus Eastern religion. That is, it could be seen as a discussion as to which side was supported by the patron goddess, and therefore which shrine, Argos or Samos, West or East, was the most faithful to, and therefore most favoured by, Hera, the representative of the ancient religion.

¹⁹ They are perhaps particular ways of telling, or slants on, the undoubted fact of the Trojan defeat.

²⁰ The Sibyl's statement that Homer *lied* may be read as a comforting statement that, despite the Judgement of the unspeakable Paris, Prince of Troy, '*Their goddess has not deserted them.*'

personal name. Heraclitus uses the term with no explanation, which forces the conclusion that by the end of the sixth century BC, the concept of 'the Sibyl' was generally understood by Greeks in Asia Minor.

In the Classical Period however, there are several centres of Sibylline prophecy, all in Asia Minor, each with a locally identified Sibyl. Literary Sibyls begin to be invented with identifying names related to their domain, because the name 'Sibyl' has become generic, not personal. 'Sibyl' indicates an older woman prophetess, making pessimistic prophetic utterances to her culture or to monarchs, not to individuals. The early Sibyl does not make divinations, or individual forecasts. She is not 'possessed'; she is a clairvoyant rather than a medium. Virgil's second Sibyl in the cave at Avernus is dramatic but atypical. The earliest poetic oracles of the Jewish Prophet, Jeremiah, some of which King Jehoiakim consigned in anger to the fire in the winter of 604 BC, would be analogous to the norm.²¹

In the Classical Period reference is made to seven Greek Sibyls, widely scattered throughout Asia and the Mediterranean. However, close textual analysis reduces this number to four, three of whom are found in Greek-speaking areas of the Coast of Asia Minor. The remaining Sibyl, the Cimmerian, is problematic.²² The full list of seven is as follows:

²¹ See *Jeremiah* 36 22-32. The earliest material in the Book is contained in chaps. 1-25. This provides an interesting example of condemnatory oracles of the same date as the earliest written Sibylline material described by Classical Historians. The parallelism of the Tarquin King burning the Sibyl of Cumae's books recorded in Italian folklore is interesting. This legend with minor variations is recorded in many sources, extensively by Varro as recorded in Lactantius's *Divine Institutes* I (vi) 33. Varro however, narrates it in connection with Tarquinius Priscus, not Tarquinius Superbus.

²² A full list of precise source references and explication of those manuscripts in which the fragments of early writers mention Sibyls will be found in Appendix 1. They are not cited here because the account is complicated and renders the main thrust of this argument difficult to follow.

THE ARCHAIC PERIOD: (c. 750 to 480 BC, THE DEFEAT OF THE PERSIANS AT SALAMIS)

Heraclitus (c.540-480 BC):

“The Sibyl”

THE CLASSICAL PERIOD: (480 to 323 BC, SALAMIS TO THE DEATH OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT)

Anonymous Samian historian (mid fifth century BC):

“Herophile, the Samian Sibyl”

Euripides:(c. 485-c. 406 BC)

“The Libyan Sibyl”

Both Callisthenes (c. 370-327 BC) and

“The Erythraean Sibyl”

Heraclides of Pontus (mid-fourth century BC)

Heraclides of Pontus (mid-fourth century BC)

“The Marpessan” or “Hellespontine Sibyl” and “The Delphic Sibyl”

Ephorus of Cyme (c. 405-330 BC)

“The Cimmerian Sibyl”

Nicanor of Stagira (c. 360-317 BC)

“The Persian Sibyl”

Three of these seven Sibyls are invented or mistaken. The **Libyan Sibyl** is a literary invention of Euripides.²³ The **Delphic Sibyl** does not seem to be founded on any real primitive tradition, and may arise from a confusion with the Pythian priestess, or from a local soothsayer, borrowing glory when Heraclides was visiting shrines, collecting material for his work, *Concerning Oracle Centres*. No other reference is known for the **Persian Sibyl** except in Nicanor.²⁴ Persia is completely remote from the early Sibylline sites and she is likely

²³ See Euripides’ Satyr play, *Busiris*, Nauck, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragments* (2nd Edn, 1889), p. 506. See also Parke p 122-3 n9

²⁴ Lactantius (I vi 33) cites Varro, who simply says of the Persian Sibyl that she was mentioned by Nicanor. Varro does not give a specific reference as to the particular work of Nicanor.

either to have been a synonym for the Marpessan Sibyl called before Cyrus, King of Persia at his conquest of Asia Minor, or an outright error, confusing the origin of the Erythraean Sibyl, (Erythraea, in Ionia) with *Mare Erythraea*, the Persian sea.

This leaves four Varronian Sibyls: Samian, Erythraean, Marpessan and Cimmerian.

The Problem of the Cimmerian Sibyl

Historically validated, as opposed to legendary, *Cimmerioi* are identified by modern archaeologists as the horsemen who, in Homer's time, lived in the plains of South Russia but who were driven out by the Scythians. The *Cimmerioi* certainly invaded Phrygia and Lydia and its city of Sardis in the reign of the last King Midas in the seventh century BC. The Cimmerians are the 'Gomer' people of *Genesis 10 2*. They go to war with Israel in Ezekiel's account.²⁵ The Cimmerians, who were called the 'Gomer people', and 'Gimirri' by Assyrians, were also the terror of Ionian Greeks. They were later expelled or destroyed by the native Lydians, the Assyrians, and by local epidemics. Having enjoyed wide fame they then, like so many other tribes, disappear from history, destroyed by Nature and enemies.

Most authorities agree that the Cimmerian Sibyl is an invention of Naevius and dismiss her from any account of the historical origins of Sibyls.²⁶ I cannot do that because of the consistency of evidence as to the Cimmerians' bizarre manner of life described by all the writers who mention them. Three Classical writers refer to them: Homer, the historian

²⁵ See *Ezekiel 38.6*, the 'Gog Oracle'. They are seen as the threatening people of 'Gomer' who will eventually be defeated by God's wrath shown in an earthquake. Gomer and Magog are brothers, sons of Japhet, grandsons of Noah and founders of the tribes that will replenish the earth. Ezekiel, after whom the book is named, was a Jewish scholar who lived early in sixth century and was deported to Babylon. The date of the book is a matter of scholarly controversy.

²⁶ Naevius is cited by Varro, as recorded in Lactantius I (vi) 33. His *Bellum Poenicum*, recorded by Varro, is a work of fiction.

Ephorus of Cyme, (c. 405-330 BC) and Naevius, the Latin dramatist, (mid third century BC).²⁷

If Homer's reference to Cimmerians, 'in the far, far west', never venturing out from their caves into the daylight is to be taken as seriously as Schliemann took his account of Troy and the Trojan War, then there were 'Cimmerians' in Italy in very early times. Homer refers to them as the people on whom the sun never shone.

Ephorus of Cyme's description of the Cimmerians, written so much later, takes up exactly that point about their singular manner of life. He asserts that the Cimmerians in Italy derived their living, not in the usual way, from agriculture, but from their *shrine*. Parke translates the passage about the Cimmerians in Italy from Ephorus's *Greek History* as follows:²⁸

*(They) inhabit underground dwellings, which they call argillae. They come and go to one another by certain tunnels, and welcome strangers into the oracle-centre situated deep below the earth. They make their livelihood from mining and from those who consult the oracle, and the king assigned them contributions. It is an ancestral custom to those concerned with the oracle-centre that they do not see the sun, but go out from the caverns only at night, and on this account the poet [Homer, *Odyssey*. XI. xv.] said of them: 'and never does the sun, as he shines, gaze on them'. But later the men were destroyed by one of the kings, because a prophecy had not turned out for him, and the oracle persists, but transferred to another place.*²⁹

²⁷ See Homer *Odyssey* 11.15 and Ephorus of Cyme *Universal History*, *F. Gr. Hist.* 70f. 134 (Strabo 5.4.5)

²⁸ See Parke, p. 73.

²⁹ Ephorus, *F. Gr. Hist.* 70f. 134 (Strabo 5. 4. 5). One is very tempted to speculate that the 'other place' might well have been Cumae and the name changed from *Sibylla Cumaea* (the Cimmerian Sibyl), to *Sibylla Cumana*, with all the ensuing confusions, as exhibited on the floor of Siena

Whilst it is not yet possible to give an answer from archaeological evidence, the coincidence of the extremely bizarre manner of life must raise the question as to whether the Cimmerians in Italy were a colony of fugitive survivors from Asia Minor. The Cimmerian Sibyl is, in Italic myth, located at lake Avernus, north-east of Cumae. Avernus and its divination may, of course, have had nothing to do with Asia Minor, there may have simply have been a fortuitous identity of name and practice but not of tribe. That does however stretch coincidence quite far. Perhaps the name culled from Homer was originally bestowed on them jokingly because of their troglodyte habits and became generally accepted.

Lake Avernus today is linked to the coast and to Cumae by tunnels. Agrippa, in the service of Augustus, caused the architect Cocceius, to make tunnels wide enough to be militarily useful, linking lake Avernus with Cumae and also linking it to Lake Lucrino and thence to the sea. Modern historians attribute these entirely to Agrippa's period. The system of canals and tunnels is unusual and extraordinary. There is certainly a useful military advantage, on one occasion the whole Roman fleet seemed to 'disappear' from the sight of its pursuer. Nonetheless, such a vast engineering project would be a huge expenditure of effort. The 1,000 yard tunnel, making possible a direct but covered way from Avernus to Cumae, is now named after Agrippa's architect, 'Cocceio's Cave'. It seems to me however, given the historical description in Ephorus, it may well have been the case that Agrippa *found* a system of tunnels already in place and, with a leap of military imagination, saw their possible strategic value and caused them to be widened and modified by his architect Cocceius.³⁰ These may have been put there by Cimmerians, or, as Parke opines, by Samians who arrived in 531 BC, fleeing the cruelty of the Tyrant Polycrates.³¹

Cathedral so many centuries later. Cumae was founded in the eighth century BC, so if one gives, like Schliemann, historical credibility to Homer's account, then the Cimmerian's oracle centre at Lake Avernus was active in the ninth, or at the latest the early eighth century, according to one's view of the likely dates of Homeric texts.

³⁰ Ephorus, *F. Gr. Hist.* 70f. 134 (Strabo 5. 4. 5).

The first allusion that we know of to the Cimmerian Sibyl, as opposed to more general divinatory practice, is made about 150 years later than Ephorus, by Naevius. Whilst he was a dramatist, not a historian, he was very concerned to portray Roman and Italic history as revealed in the works of historians and he may have had more sources than are available to us. Naevius's Sibyl prophecies the illustrious part that Aeneas's descendants are to play in the foundation of Rome.³² Obviously, her speech itself is a literary device to make an historical résumé compelling and dramatic by putting it in the mouth of the frightening and clairvoyant Sibyl. However, because of Homer's observation and Ephorus's account of there being a 'Cimmerian' oracle centre, which account predates Naevius by some 150 years, I am not at ease with the widely held assumption that Cimmerian Sibyl, or 'Cimmerians' in Italy were also fictional inventions.

In later Classical times, there was a broadening of the term 'Sibyl' to include personal divination and mediums, and it is in this sense that Ephorus and Naevius understand 'Sibyl'. By Roman times this was certainly the case. Virgil's account of the Cuman Sibyl, who begs not to be overpowered by the God, reluctantly agrees, and then runs madly about the cave in a state of possession, illustrates this in *Aeneid* VI. The Sibyl at Cumae responded to individual consultations, and cast oracles onto leaves thrown to the supplicants.

It is then, safe to ignore whatever was happening in Avernus and Cumae as far as the primitive and Archaic Sibyls are concerned. This is not because Avernus is too late, it is not; it is simply that the practice of divination there was not really that of the Archaic Sibyls. The early Sibyls were not mediums; neither did they appear to undertake personal consultation. Oracles may have existed in Archaic times in Avernus and Cumae and have come from the same primitive Earth Mother source brought by migrants from Asia Minor but from indications in the written texts, they were originally not strictly Sibylline.

³¹ See Parke, p. 86.

³² Naevius, *Bellum Punicum* fr. 12.

If the problematic presence of the ‘Cimmerian Sibyl’ is thus excluded, then *all* three remaining attested primitive Sibyls are seen to be concentrated in Asia Minor.

Where was the place of origin of the Sibyl or Sibylline rites?

We have seen that on close examination of the seven early Sibyls mentioned by Greek writers, three remain as authentic early Sibyls: The Hellespontine (or Marpessan), the Erythraean and the Samian. Some early commentators opine that there was *one* original Sibyl who travelled and settled in at least three places during the course of her life.³³ The idea that a single individual may have founded them is not seen to be impossible when one consults the map. (See Frontispiece map.) It may well be the case. However, the assertion that the Sibyl travelled, need not be understood literally. It may be a personified narrative telling of the spread of a particular kind of religion and a form of worship and divination. What *can* be said is that by Classical times there were Sibylline shrines in these places having written records of Sibylline oracles, although the ‘Sibyl’ had been said by Heraclitus to be a thousand years old as early as Archaic times.³⁴

Samos as the place of origin of the Sibyl

By Classical times, Samos had so far dropped out of the contention as to which place was her birthplace as to have its Sibylline connotations forgotten. It was probably culturally eclipsed by the proximity and growing economic and cultural ascendancy first of Ephesus and then of Erythrae. Nonetheless, the fact that the myths of Hera locate her birthplace on Samos makes it a very important Sibylline shrine, since all the early Sibyls were dedicated to Hera.

Hera had a primitive oracle centre near Corinth in the Geometric period (from the fall of Mycenae just after the Trojan War in the mid 1200s till the eighth century: the Greek ‘Dark Ages’). Parke asserts that there are some traditions that trace back the origin of the

³³ See Appendix 1, entry for Heraclitus, reported in Plutarch *Moralia* 397A

³⁴ Reported in Plutarch *Moralia* 397A

Samian shrine to Argos, or at least establish a connection so that it is not irrelevant to draw comparisons with the relatively close temple of Hera at Corinth.³⁵ It strikes me however, as an equally probable interpretation of the facts that the influence came from Samos to Argos and Corinth during the period of Mycenaean trade.³⁶ On the evidence of the anonymous Samian historian of the mid fifth century BC, the personal name 'Herophile' originated on Samos. His contemporary, Xanthus the Lydian, used it for his Ephesian Sibyl, or more strictly the Sibyl whom he said was sent for from Ephesus. A brief glance at the map showing Ephesus on the mainland coast opposite the island of Samos will assure us that the Samian Sibyl herself could certainly have been in Ephesus. There is no need to understand from Xanthus a separate Ephesian cult and Sibyl mentioned by no other extant writer.

At an early stage, once Samos had been forgotten, there was contention between Erythraea and Marpessus as to which was the 'original' home of the Sibyl: presumably this had economic as well as religious significance for the towns.

'Hellespontine' Marpessus as the place of origin of the Sibyl

If the origin of the cult of Sibyl were not Samos, then a good argument can be adduced for Marpessus in the Troad, a weaker one for Erythrae. The most important piece of written evidence was recorded by the great traveller and geographer, Pausanias of Lydia (fl. 150 AD).³⁷ It consists of four lines of hexameter verse, taken from her oracle. This is translated by Parke as follows:³⁸

³⁵ See Parke, p. 66

³⁶ The myth insists that the birthplace of Hera is on Samos, which may be a symbolic personified rendering of the birth place of the cult. [See Frontispiece map.] The Romans, after all, quite deliberately imported the goddess Cybele, the *Magna Mater*, from the East.

³⁷ Pausanias, *Guide to Greece*, 10.12 3. trans. By Peter Levi, 2nd Edn (London: Penguin, 1979) X.xii.2-4)

³⁸ See Parke, p. 51, translating Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 10-12-3.

*And I am born betwixt a mortal and a god, of an immortal nymph and a father
feeding on bread: on my mother's side Ida-born, but my fatherland is red
Marpessus consecrated to my mother and its river is the Aidoneus.*

Marpessus is a very small and undistinguished village near Troy, in the territory of the Gergithes, a tribe whose chief city was Gergis or Gergithus.³⁹ John M. Cook has explored the area and identified the location which still shows all the features described by Pausanias thus:

*Even in my time on the Trojan Mount Ida there were the ruins of the city of
MARPESSOS, and about sixty inhabitants. All the soil round Marpessos is
reddish and terribly dry, so that the river Aidoneus sinks into the earth and
comes up again and then sinks again, and in the end vanishes underground, I
suppose because this part of Mount Ida is fine-grained and porous. Marpessos
is thirty miles from Alexandria in the Troad.*⁴⁰

The red earth and the fact that the river keeps sinking underground must have given the river its name and association with Hades.

The very fact of the undistinguished nature of Marpessus does, as Parke points out, make it more convincing that some foundation lies behind the legend, because otherwise the choice of this place lacks motive.⁴¹ 'Sibyl' is not a Greek name or word but might easily belong to the native language of the Gergithes. Hexameters which were characteristic of the

³⁹ See Parke, p. 51.

⁴⁰ Pausanias, *Guide to Greece*, translated by Peter Levi, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1979), X.xii.2-4. See also J. M. Cook, *The Troads: an archaeological and topographical study* (London:[n. pub.], 1977) 281 ff.

⁴¹ See Parke, p. 64.

Sibylline oracles were used in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, which has indications of a local origin.⁴²

The connection of Marpessus and Troy with the earliest recorded Sibyls is made more than once in the oracles. There are legends linking the south Troad with the sons of Aeneas, which may be understood to mean that refugees, fleeing from the destruction of Troy, settled in the area of Marpessus and possibly migrated southwards towards Erythrae, taking their religious traditions and rites with them. Of course this is far from conclusive since the processes of selection by which manuscripts have survived is arbitrary and the product of chance. So much has been lost to us including most of the Sibylline oracles themselves. Nonetheless, it is a reasonable hypothesis that whatever started the fame and cultural significance of the figure of the Sibyl may have been located in or near Troy and been carried to a wider Greek world by migrants who fled southward from its destruction.

Erythrae as the place of origin of the Sibyl

A possible second stage in the broad dissemination of the Sibylline cult is outlined by Parke as follows:

*The essential point is that if it is accepted that the Sibylline oracles were originally produced in Marpessus ... Before they could become a popular phenomenon, they had to obtain a footing in one or more of the large centres of population and communication. Ephesus was just such a place. ... It was ultimately Erythrae which became the legendary centre of Sibylline oracles.*⁴³

Erythrae went on to claim to be the, 'birthplace of the Sibyl'. Heraclides of Pontus, writing in the late 300s, when Samos had been forgotten, gives the name Herophile to the

⁴² See Parke, p. 52.

⁴³ See Parke, p.64.

Sibyl of Erythrae, and this became conventional among later authors although interestingly it was never used officially in Erythrae itself.⁴⁴

The arguments for dismissing that claim are not new and are stated by Pausanias with a clarity upon which I cannot improve. He is referring to the Erythraean interpretation of the crucial Sibylline oracle, printed above, in which she is claiming that her mother is Ida-born and that her fatherland is Marpessus.

*But the Erythraeans, who dispute possession of Herophile more eagerly than anyone else in Greece, point to Mount Korykon, and a cave in the mountain where they say Herophile was born from a nymph and a shepherd of the district called Theodoros; the nymph had the title of Idaian simply because overgrown places used to be called Idai. But as for the verse about Marpessos and the river Aidoneus, the Erythraeans expunge it from the oracles.*⁴⁵

It is almost impossible to choose an 'authentic' birthplace because the Sibyl's shrines are all relatively close in one region. The 'original' Sibyl was said to travel between them. It is possible to interpret this to mean that the foundation dates of the Shrines may be very close together. As previously stated, it was perhaps a short time after the fall of the Minoan civilisation and the destruction of Troy, about 1200 BC. This is much earlier than Parke, the great authority, places their inception, and whilst this is perhaps foolhardy, I remember that he has not considered the mythic connections made with Troy might be relevant to the inception of the cult. His reasoning is based on the dates of the appearance of the earliest written sources (about 500 BC). He does not, in *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity*, give any consideration to the subject of the historical advent of written text as a form of cultural preservation and the relation of that to the oral tradition. Whilst we can date the style of the *extant* oracular poems no earlier than the seventh century BC, the inception

⁴⁴ See Parke, p.66.

⁴⁵ Pausanias, *Guide to Greece*, 10.12 3. trans. By Peter Levi, 2nd Edn (London: Penguin, 1979) X.xii.2-4)

of the Sibyl cult and Sibylline oracles may be older than the point at which it was common to preserve such poems in writing.

Both Samos and Marpessus seem to me, for the reasons adduced above, to mount strong claims to any 'original' Sibyl.⁴⁶ If the suppression of the old religion and the acceptance of the new was felt by some of its adherents to presage doom to the disloyal culture that could neglect its old goddesses, this would explain the critical tenor and tone of the Sibylline prophecy. The foundation of the Sibylline shrines may reflect a period when a method of continuing the ancient worship performed in underground caves was transmuted into something sufficiently 'new' to escape suppression and allow a practice of the old religion side by side with that of the new pantheon of male sky gods. If that is so, then in 'Sibyls' we are not seeing a fundamentally different rite, with a datable inception at some time in the Greek 'dark ages'. Even though there may have been a charismatic individual, perhaps called Sibyl in the language of the Gergithes, the cult was more probably the covert development of a variant on something of dateless antiquity, which allows the expression of that which is dark but essential in the human psyche.

THE LATIN SIBYLLINE TRADITION

There are three Sibylline cult sites in Italy: Cumae, Avernus and Albunea (modern Tivoli). The Greek Cimmerian site supposedly on Lake Avernus has already been discussed. We are now therefore, concerned with the Cumae Sibyl and the Albunean or Tiburtine Sibyls.

It is sensible first to examine the historical account of these Sibyls in Italy, and then to look at those works of the imagination which shaped the popular and the intellectual conception of who and what Sibyls were, the *Aeneid* and the 'Messianic' *Fourth Eclogue* of Virgil.

⁴⁶ Sibyls themselves, however, may be a transmutation of the priestesses of the older religion, perhaps originally operating a secret or encoded version of it or of one of its rites.

The most important historical account of the Sibyls in Latin literature is given by the Roman historian, Varro, who assembled the famous list of ten Sibyls. It is from Varro's list that the ten Sibyls of Siena Cathedral derive. The text on the pictures includes Varro's Latin attribution of sources. All other Renaissance Sibyl cycles take names from this list.

VARRO (116-27 BC)

Marcus Terentius Varro was among the greatest Latin scholars. He produced works on the social history of the Roman people, chronology, geography, rhetoric, jurisprudence, philosophy, philology, music, medicine, architecture and literary history. We possess only two substantial works: *De lingua latina* in part, and book III of *Rerum rusticarum*. We know of fifty-five other works substantially from a list given by St Jerome (c.348-420).⁴⁷

The most important work relating to Sibyls is the *Antiquitatum rerum humanarum et divinarum libri XLI*. The first twenty-five books dealt with *res humanarum*, 'things human' and the last sixteen dealt with 'things divine'. Lactantius, the Christian apologist, (c.240-c.320) preserves what Varro has to say about Sibyls in paraphrase, in his *Divine Institutes* (I. vi 3).⁴⁸

Varro's list of ten Sibyls

Varro's scholarship and knowledge of the Italian Sibyls, and his understanding of the term as generic not personal, justified his increasing their number greatly, naming ten. Scholars presume that the order in which he placed the Sibyls represented his ideas about their relative age, and that the first three, now known to be fictional inventions, are arranged according to the relative age of the civilisation or cult after which they are named.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Jerome, *Opusculum*. iii. 522 ff.

⁴⁸ There is scholarly argument as to whether Lactantius had sight of Varro's work directly or through some other source.

⁴⁹ I am here using Parke's translation, pp. 30-31. It will be noted that the humanist who composed the plan for the pictorial representation of the Sibyls on the floor of Siena cathedral together with the

The first was from the Persians, of whom Nicanor, who wrote the deeds of Alexander of Macedon, made mention.

The second was the Libyan, whom Euripides mentioned in Lamia's prologue.

The third was the Delphian, about whom Chrysippus speaks in the book which he put together on divination.

The fourth was the Cimmerian in Italy, whom Naevius names in his books on the Punic War and Piso in his Annals.

The fifth was the Erythraean, of whom Apollodorus of Erythrae asserts that she was his fellow citizen and that she prophesied to the Greeks, when they were on their way to Ilion, that Troy would fall and that Homer would write falsehoods.

The sixth was the Samian, concerning whom Eratosthenes writes that he had discovered her in the ancient annals of the Samians.

The seventh was the Cumaean by name Amalthea, who by others is named Herophile or Domophile. She brought nine books to Tarquinius Priscus.

(Varro goes on to tell the famous legend in some detail of how the Sibyl burnt six of these books before Tarquin could be persuaded to pay her high price for the three that remained.)

The eighth was the Hellespontine, born in the territory of Troy at the village of Marpessus near the town of Gergithus, of whom Heraclides of Pontus writes that she lived in the times of Solon and Cyrus.

The ninth was the Phrygian, who prophesied at Ancyra.

Latin text thereon, quotes directly from Lactantius's version of Varro. That is, he cites the sources Varro gives, as for example, '*The Libyan Sibyl whom Euripides mentioned*' as well as the list of names. He does not, however, employ the Varronian order, but a quite different principle dictates their position on the floor.

*The tenth was the Tiburtine, by name Albunea, who is worshipped at Tibur as a goddess by the banks of the river Anio, in whose eddy it is said an image of her was found holding a book, and her lots were removed to the Capitol by the Senate.*⁵⁰

Unlike Heraclides of Pontus, Varro is not researching primary texts such as the Sibylline Books, or the archives of the Sibylline shrines. He is simply an assiduous compiler, wishing to record as many different Sibyls to which reference can be found in any and all texts available to him. (Varro includes the Italian **Cimmerian Sibyl**, already discussed. He gives us the extra information that Piso refers to the Sibyl in his *Annals*.)⁵¹ It will be seen that he adds three Sibyls to the Greek list of seven Sibyls: the **Phrygian**, the **Albuncan** and the **Cumaean**. We shall now examine the origins and history of these Sibyls.

Varro's account of the Phrygian Sibyl.

The origins of the Phrygian Sibyl are not known. No other details are given save the bald entry of the Phrygian Sibyl and the tantalising assertion that she prophesied at Ancyra. Heraclides (the Greek Historian, mid fourth century BC) mentions her existence fleetingly in association with the wholly dubious Sibylla Delphica (Varro's third), saying that the Delphic Sibyl's place of origin was Phrygia. Since no details or authorities are cited by Varro, it is difficult to have any opinion other than that the Phrygian is likely to be as fictional as the Delphic.

⁵⁰ 'Lots' seems to mean her written oracles.

⁵¹ Lucius Calpurnius Piso Frugi, the annalist, mid second century BC, the generation just before Varro, is not to be confused with Caesar's famous friend and father-in-law, Piso Caesoninus, living some 150 years later. Piso the Historian's *Annales* apparently started with the origins of Rome and narrated the whole sweep of time till his own day, in at least seven books. The latest date mentioned is 146 BC. Antiquarian and mythological fragments are also attributed to him.

Since the Phrygian Sibyl appears to be a fiction we are left with two Italian Sibyls not so far discussed: the Albunean and the Cumaean.

Varro's account of the Albunean Sibyl.

Varro's tenth Sibyl is the Roman Sibyl, *Sibylla Albunea*, also called the *Tiburtine Sibyl*. Varro, according to Lactantius, introduces his account of the Sibylla Tiburtina with the word '*dicitur*', 'it is said', so he seems to be deriving the story from the oral tradition of folk tales, not from a text. The mention of the Senate may be the reason that Varro places her last, i.e. because he may have seen her advent as in the period of the Senate's rule, after the period of the Kings. Parke thinks that the original purpose of the fable was to attribute a book of Sibylline prophesies to a local nymph.⁵² (Presumably he is assuming that the association with the river makes the original shrine that of a nymph.) Parke points out that her name, Albunea, appears in Virgil's *Aeneid*, as the name of an oracle in the territory of Lavinium and that the appellation 'Albunea' probably refers to the sulphur-impregnated streams which are found both at Albula near Tibur (modern Tivoli) and at Albunea. The round Temple of Vesta and the square Temple of the Sibyl at Tivoli above the 'Sibyl's gorge' were both built in the last years of the Republic, in the lifetime of Varro. What this signifies was a special renewed local awareness and celebration of the Albunean Sibyl, close to Rome, which may have prompted the Roman Varro's writing. What we have at Tivoli however, is a record of a popular oral tradition of a Tiburtine Sibyl whose historicity as an ancient cult is unverifiable.⁵³

⁵² Parke, p.36

⁵³ Tibullus, Varro's contemporary, (c. 55-19 BC) also gives a list of Sibyls that includes a reference to the Albunean as part of a poem written on the occasion of his patron's son being made one of the *quindecimvir sacris faciundis* who had custody of the Sibylline Books. The reference (Frag. 2.5) says, *What consecrated lots the woman of Tibur had carried and borne through the waters of the Anio in the fold of her robe without wetting them.* This seems to be a reference to current folk lore. It is probably taken from Varro's *Antiquitates rerum divinarum*.

This leaves us to account for the Cumaean Sibyl, and the undoubted historical cult at Cumae on the Bay of Naples, written about by historians and famously, in imaginative literature, by Virgil. First we shall discuss the real history of the cult, so far as it is known.

THE CUMAEAN SIBYL

The town of Cumae was the earliest Greek colony in the peninsula, founded by settlers from Chalcis in Euboea actually c.750 BC, although the traditional date is given as 1050. The foundation of the town is very early, but its oracle centre was later than the Greek Cimmerian oracle centre located at Avernus in the mountains to the North East. That had ceased to exist before the Cumaean centre began.

There are two separate myths about Cumae, one, a native Italic myth concerning the house of Tarquin and the Sibylline books; the other seems to originate from Greek Sibylline sources which Virgil exploits in the *Aeneid*.

The Roman oral tradition: Tarquin and the Sibyl of Cumae

The folk-tale of Tarquin and the Sibyl is well known. It concerns the period of the Tarquins, the Etruscan Kings of Rome in the sixth century, about 170 years after its foundation. The Sibyl offers Tarquin nine books of her prophecies for a large sum. The Tarquin immediately repulses her and she is rudely sent packing. Her response is to burn three of the books and return, asking the same price; again she is rudely repulsed. The third time she returns with three books and this time a sense of doom descends on the Tarquin and he pays her the original asking price.

Most versions credit the interview to have taken place between the Sibyl and Tarquin the Proud, last of the Kings of Rome (534-510 BC) since the behaviour towards that venerable old lady is in accordance with his legendary character. However, Varro places it earlier in the sixth century, and cites Tarquinius Priscus, (616-579 BC), probably because as well as his predecessor, Numa Pompilius (717-673), the Sabine King, Tarquinius Priscus, the great builder of Rome, was also seen as a founder and reformer of Roman religion. Tarquinius Priscus interested himself in Etruscan cults and founded the Temple of the

Capitoline Triad of Gods. He could therefore be seen as concerning himself with oracles and prophecies.

Varro takes this legend very seriously and is the first source to identify the Sibyl with oracle centre at Cumae. Livy (c.59 BC-c. AD 12) ignores the story in his huge and compendious *History of Rome*, probably dismissing it as vulgar popular invention.

THE CUMAEAN SIBYL IN THE ARCHAIC PERIOD (c. 750 to 480 BC)

Oracles are first stored on the Capitol in the period of the Kings (500s BC).

Varro may well have been right to take the legend seriously. In the latter years of the period of the Kings, the mid sixth-century, a collection of oracles was stored on the Capitol.⁵⁴ This can be compared with the collection made by the Pisistratidae and stored on the Acropolis at about the same period.⁵⁵ This would, as Parke points out, be a very shrewd way of bringing a potentially dangerous religious ecstatic cult under the control of the authorities by making it official. The King would collect the oracles, perhaps even buying selected, 'authentic' oracles from a *chresmologos*, whilst rejecting others. This may be what the legend about Tarquin and the Sibyl reflects. There is no reason why the *chresmologos* should not have been the 'Sibyl', that is a female seer whose oracles concerned the State. The oracles were at that time in the sixth century placed under the control of two men, the *Duoviri*, though in later times this number was to be several times increased until there were ten and finally fifteen. Oracles at that time were not under the aegis of Apollo. Rome had no temple of Apollo. His cult was imported, not as a source of oracles but as an attempt to stop a plague, as late as 433 BC.

Whatever is the precise truth about the Sibyl and the Tarquin, one can be fairly sure that oracles were circulating in Italy as early as the late sixth century BC, very probably from

⁵⁴ See Parke, p. 77.

⁵⁵ See Herodotus, V. xc. 2; V. xcii. 2; VII. vi. 3.

the region of Cumae. This collection of oracles by the Tarquins in Italy, now lost, is very early; it is as early as Heraclitus who gives us the first written record of the Sibyl in Eastern Greece.

The Sibyl at Cumae is the only one for whose cult archaeological evidence from the Archaic period is available. None of the surviving literary texts however, date from earlier than the Hellenistic period, though they refer to a legendary Sibyl of venerable antiquity.

There are two theories as to the origin of the cult at Cumae that give alternative sources for its origin than **Euboea**, from where the first Greek settlers came. These theories give a later date for the establishment of the cult than that of the foundation of the city. One traces the origin to **Samos** the other to **Erythrae**.

The Tradition that traces the Origins of the Cumaean Sibyl to Samos

It is usual to suppose that the original settlers brought the cult with them from Euboea in 750 BC, when the town was founded. However, Parke argues convincingly that it was more likely to have been founded later, by Samians who arrived in 531 BC, fleeing the cruelty of the Tyrant Polycrates.⁵⁶ His argument is based on archaeological evidence.

We have already discussed the elaborate system of tunnels joining the inner caverns at Cumae discovered by Maiuri who, in 1932, excavated the main cave which is thought to be that to which Virgil refers. Whilst a natural cavern, a complex and very large system of tunnels joining it to inner caves, each with its own lintels and door or shutter fixings, an entrance tunnel with windows, and carved benches for enquirers was made. Parke argues that if such an elaborate piece of engineering work as the altered caves and tunnels of Cumae were to be completed for cultic purposes it would call for the whole resources of the Greek

⁵⁶ See Parke, p. 86.

Polis and the presence of a Tyrant to impose the work on the populace. It would also require a high degree of technological expertise.⁵⁷

The Tyrant Polycrates had caused an even more remarkable tunnel to be created at Samos, so the refugees were likely to have the engineering skills. At that time the region of Cumae was ruled by its own benevolent Tyrant, Aristodemus called *Malakos*, 'the soft', very different from Polycrates on Samos. Aristodemus had, however, successfully organised resistance to invasion from the Etruscans in 524 and 505 BC. Thus, at this period, both conditions of available technology and Tyrannical rule were fulfilled. Parke therefore opines that the oracle centre at Cumae was founded a little before 492 BC, the date of Aristodemus's death.⁵⁸

If refugees came from Samos, then they may have introduced the Sibylline cult. If the Sibyl proper were introduced from Samos in the early fifth century, it would not be surprising to find dedications to Hera, the great goddess of Samos. Professor Guarducci was the first to produce such a reading on a bronze disc with an inscription in Euboic script, running from right to left with letter forms identifying it as Cumaeian.⁵⁹ She dates it as mid-seventh century but Parke objects that the forms of some of the letters could not be earlier than the sixth century and could perfectly well be found in the early fifth. Cumaeian coins, dated to c. 490 BC had just such a retrograde inscription, perhaps consciously archaising.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ See Parke, p. 87.

⁵⁸ See Parke p. 87.

⁵⁹ M. Guarducci, *Bolletino della Commissione Archeologica Communa di Roma* 72, (1946-8), 130-41.

⁶⁰ Parke, p. 88 rather touchingly says that the bronze disk must be an oracular lot (*sors*). However, given the inscription, I think it is much more likely to be a ticket. It reads, '*Hera does not permit a supplementary enquiry of the oracle*'. In other words, '*If you want to ask two questions, you must queue up and pay again: once in a consultation you can't bombard her with questions and stay in there all day keeping the queue waiting*.' Whether it is a ticket or a lot, the important thing about it is

There is then, firm archaeological evidence of a cult dedicated to Hera in the early fifth century BC, which supports the notion that the tunnels described later by Virgil may have been put there by Samian engineers. This is also firm evidence of the worship of Hera and no evidence that her servant Herophile, the Sibyl, was not present as part of that worship.

The Tradition that Traces the Cumaean Sibyl's Origins to Erythrae.

These accounts are less well supported by the archaeological and historical evidence.

The Erythraean origin of the cult at Cumae is mentioned in the pseudo-Aristotelian *De Mirabilibus Auscultationibus*, a miscellany of marvels written in the third century BC whose probable source was **Lycus of Rhegium** (fl. 300 BC).⁶¹ It mentions, '*the underground chamber of Sibylla, the chresmologos*' at Cumae, and says, '*she was Erythraean, though by some of the inhabitants of Italy called Cumaean.*' Although the source is late, we must remember that Lycus consulted earlier documents now lost. Again we are taken back to a Sibylline origin in Eastern Greece. **Livy** (c. 59 BC-AD 17) evidently knew of this explanation of her origin for he says that Carmenta the prophetess lived, '*before the arrival of the Sibyl*'.⁶² **Petronius** tells a version of a folk tale in the *Satyricon*, in the first century AD.⁶³ Much later, **Servius**, who was born c. AD 365, tells the same tale in greater detail.⁶⁴ The Sibyl had been offered long life by Apollo, who had added the condition that she must leave Erythrae and never see her native soil again. She forgot to ask for continued youth so she aged terribly and shrank till she was miserable, having lost all her bodily strength. At last

that it appeals to the authority of Hera to control the process of divination. It is not just a particular message like, 'Hera will bless your venture', which might come out of an Apolline oracle-centre. His cult was in any case imported as late as 433 BC. Here it is clear that the deity in control is Hera.

⁶¹ [Aristotle] *De Mirabilibus Auscultationibus*, XCV, 838a, 5.

⁶² Livy, I, vii, 8. Also see Parke, p. 79.

⁶³ Petronius, *The Satyricon*, trans. by John Sullivan (London: Penguin, 1973), p. 93.

⁶⁴ See Parke, p. 79 and Servius's commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid* 6.32

her compatriot Erythraeans sent her a letter sealed in the ancient customary way with clay. At the sight of this at last she was able to die.⁶⁵

THE CUMAEAN SIBYL IN THE CLASSICAL PERIOD (480 TO 323 BC)

The End of the Cult at Cumae

The final demise of the oracle centre in Cumae is recorded in his *World History* by **Diodorus Siculus**, a Historian of the first century BC, who flourished under Caesar and Augustus till at least 21 BC.

The end came when Cumae was captured by the Campanians in 421 BC. Parke translates this as follows:

*About this time in Italy the Campanians with strong forces made an expedition against Cumae and conquered the Cumaeans in battle and cut to pieces the majority of those ranged against them. Then after settling down to a siege and making many assaults they took the city by storm. They plundered it thoroughly and enslaved those who were taken and assigned from their own number enough to inhabit it.*⁶⁶

There was, in other words, a total destruction of its culture as well as its structure in the late fifth century BC. The native population was simply removed and replaced.

⁶⁵ This is clearly a version of the old folk-tale that she shrank till all that was left was her voice. Parke, p. 41 implies that there is no relationship with history. He does not say why. However, there is no reason to assume that the oral tradition does not preserve historical origins. The story can be read as a symbolic narrative. Read in this way, it is an account of the spread of a Sibylline cult to the earliest Greek colony, Cumae. Gradually the connections with, and nurture from, its cultural and religious origins dwindle, till it is eventually perceived as a weak and feeble religious sect when brought into contact and comparison with the vigour of its practice in its place of origin. Its practice in Italy then dies.

⁶⁶ See Parke, p.81.

This means that Virgil and Varro cannot have seen or participated in Sibylline rites themselves and must have been working from texts or in Virgil's case perhaps also from imagination, having visited the site. Pausanias's account is indeed one of a long defunct site where little remains.⁶⁷ Some modern scholars imply that it existed later or that it was revived in Augustus's reign. There is however, no basis whatever for this assumption.

The surviving archive of Sibylline oracles

Before embarking on a discussion of the Sibyl in Latin literature, it is important to indicate what happened to the Historical collection of Sibylline Oracles kept in the Capitoline Temple of Jupiter. A knowledge of how these were destroyed and replaced is relevant to an understanding of the Judeo-Christian tone of Virgil's fourth, 'Messianic' *Eclogue*.

The Nature and Function of the Sibylline Books

The Sibylline Books were thought to have enormous importance, and were the treasure of the Roman religion, consulted in times of national emergency such as plague, impending war, or the birth of some malformed prodigy. The birth of two headed beasts, hermaphrodites or any other such anomaly was believed to presage disaster to the State if not ritually exorcised. Only the Decemviri of the Sacris Faciundis were allowed to broach the Sibylline Books and consult them. By order of the Senate, on specific occasions, two decemvirs were appointed to do this. The punishment for opportunist private consultation of these books was alarming. The sentence was the same as that for parricide, the worst of offences to the Latin mind. The punishment was to be sewn into a sack alive and cast into the sea to drown, which indeed happened to one hapless and over curious duumvir, the legendary Marcus Acilius or Atilius, who was held guilty of secretly copying some of the text.

⁶⁷ Pausanias, *Guide to Greece*, translated by Peter Levi, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1979), X.xii.2-4.

Livy gives several examples of occasions when the books were consulted, in the *History of Rome*.⁶⁸ For the year 461 BC we come upon the following joyfully eccentric piece:

*The year was marked by ominous signs: fires blazed in the sky, there was a violent earthquake, and a cow talked –there was a rumour that a cow had talked the previous year, but nobody believed it: this year they did. Nor was this all: it rained lumps of meat. Thousands of birds (we are told) seized and devoured the pieces in mid-air, while what fell to the ground lay scattered about for several days without going putrid. The Sibylline Books were consulted by two officials, who found in them the prediction that danger threatened from a ‘concourse of alien men’, who might attack ‘the high places of the City, with the shedding of blood’.*⁶⁹

It is not revealed why it was necessary to consult the Sibylline Books to find out that if Rome is to be attacked, very likely it would be by foreigners and that wars bring bloodshed.

The Fate of the Original Sibylline Books and the Texts as we know them today

On the 6 July, 83 BC, in the Civil War, when Sulla was fighting his way up the peninsula to attack Rome, three years after he had sacked Athens and thus assured the political dominance of Rome, the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus was burned down and with it the store containing all the Sibylline Books.⁷⁰ Thereafter a delegation was sent out to Erythrae to try to recover any Sibylline Oracles preserved at the Shrine.

⁶⁸ Titus Livius, (c.59 BC-AD 17). About 90 BC, when aged about 30, he began to write the huge *History of Rome*, beginning from its foundation which consisted of about 142 books of which 30 survive. He worked on it for over 40 years until his death.

⁶⁹ Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, (III. x.) trans. by Aubrey de Sélincourt, (London: Penguin, 1960) p.194.

⁷⁰ See Parke, p.137.

Lactantius in *Divine Institutes*, I. vi 14, gives the names of three Commissioners. He says:

*That very careful writer, Fenestella, speaking about the quindecimvirs, says that, 'when the Capitol was restored, Gaius Curio, the consul, made a motion to the Senate that envoys be sent to Erythraea to bring back to Rome the songs of the Sibyl gained by conquest. P. Gabinus, M Otacilius, and L. Valerius were, therefore, sent out and brought to Rome about a thousand verses written down by private citizens.'*⁷¹

The results of this expedition proved to be disappointing.⁷² Three books of Sibylline prophecy had been the corpus in the secret archive lost in the fire. A book of conventional length ran to one thousand verses. Only one thousand verses had been brought back from Erythrae.

It seems the Senate assumed that there was no point in simply going to Cumae. Parke adds that they *may* have gone there fruitlessly. Two centuries later Pausanias could find no archive there. If the records were regarded as supremely important to the wisdom of the Roman state and had therefore been removed to be stored in Rome underneath the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, then it would not be surprising if no embassy were sent to Cumae. There was no point.

Erroneous assumptions made about the nature of Sibylline oracles after the fire had destroyed the originals

After the Sibylline Oracles were destroyed by the temple fire, two beliefs about their form and nature were prevalent. These were that they were all the oracles of the Sibyl of Cumae, and that the form of all genuine oracles was that of the Acrostic. The first may or

⁷¹ Fenestella, a Roman Historian, d. AD 20. Wrote *Annales* and had a high reputation as accurate and documentary. Trans. by Sister Mary Francis McDonald O. P. (Washington: University of America Press, 1964), p. 34.

⁷² See Parke, p. 138.

may not be correct; the second is certainly false but became the received wisdom of later generations. The Christian Church in later times assumed that Acrostic form was the defining characteristic of the genuine Sibylline oracle, as witness Saint Augustine's famous attempt to translate a late Christianised oracle from the Greek into Latin, maintaining its form. The committee mentioned by Fenestella appointed, after the fire, to edit remaining material culled from shrines in the Empire might have worked on this assumption. If so, they would have destroyed the really early oracles as inauthentic.⁷³

Acrostics in Oracles

The only fragment of the original Sibylline Books we still possess contains two oracles in the form of acrostics. The fragment has survived fortuitously in Phlegon's *Book of Wonders*, put together in Hadrian's reign (AD 117-38).⁷⁴ The fragment quoted by Phlegon contains some seventy verses in continuous acrostics. If Phlegon is right that this is the oracle reported to the Senate in 125 BC, then acrostics are encountered before the time of the temple fire in 83 BC.

These original oracles are dated at the time of the Second Punic War on internal evidence. Form as well as content assists us in dating them. There are no acrostics in Archaic or Classical Greek. However, they were much favoured in the Hellenistic period along with other word-play devices, for example cryptograms of the author's name. Acrostics seemed

⁷³ Fenestella is quoted by Lactantius in *The Divine Institutes*, trans. Mary Francis McDonald O. P. (Washington: University of America Press, 1964), p. 34.

⁷⁴ See Parke, p. 137. Herman Diels having done extensive, convincing research on this fragment, in *Sibyllinische Blätter* (1890), pp. 77-103, it is possible to see that it consists of two oracles dating between 207 and 200 BC concerning the prodigious birth of hermaphrodites. These oracles came to be preserved because they were made public and recorded when the Senate ordered that the Sibylline Books be consulted in relation to the birth of another hermaphrodite in 125 BC. Presumably the oracles had to be expounded aloud at that time in order for public alarm to be assuaged by the subsequent enactment of the correct propitiatory rituals derived from the oracles.

highly appropriate for Sibylline prophecy for two reasons: crude interpolations could easily be detected because additional lines would disrupt the pattern of initial letters of subsequent lines. The second reason is that the very cleverness of the acrostic gives it an air of magical inevitability and formal autonomous completeness: an air of the absolute.

THE SIBYL IN LATIN LITERATURE: VIRGIL

Virgil (70-19 B C) and the Sibyls near the Bay of Naples: Cumae and Avernus

Virgil wrote two important works concerning the Sibyls, the *Aeneid* and the 'Messianic' *Eclogue*. The *Eclogue* will be discussed later after the reasons for an apparent 'Christianisation' of vocabulary and tone in Sibylline literature have been examined. Here we are concerned with Virgil and the Sibyl at Cumae.

The encounter between Aeneas and the Sibyl at Cumae, one of the greatest scenes in Latin epic poetry, was certainly the product of wide and deep reading, as well as a visit to the site as it was about four hundred years after it had ceased to function as an oracle centre. Virgil probably saw the great Antrum, the large system of caves rediscovered by Maiuri in 1932, which closely correspond to Virgil's imagined account of a consultation with the Sibyl.

In reading the accounts of the Sibyls that have come down to us one can perceive three kinds of ecstatic prophetic encounter, the last two of which Virgil recreates in the *Aeneid* Book VI.

The earliest accounts present the Sibyl as a clairvoyant, not a medium. A god does not possess her, neither is she herself accorded worship. She fulfils much the same social role as the Old Testament prophet, giving warnings to the nation as a whole, or to its king, of the dire consequences that are to follow if the correct moral or religious acts are not performed. Frequently the advice or criticism is pretty clear. An example of that is preserved in Xanthus of Lydia's mid-fourth-century account of the Sibyl warning Cyrus and the Persians not to burn King Croesus and the hapless young Lydian boys alive. She does not give personal

consultations to predict the future of individuals. She is not a fortune-teller. Her cult is dedicated to Hera, probably as a representation of the old Earth Goddesses.

Later accounts of the Sibyl show that ecstatic and prophetic cults have been subsumed into the worship of Apollo and that this has debased and altered the early Sibylline cult. The accounts of the Apolline Sibyl show her role and function to have changed. She is no longer a clairvoyant but a medium, giving personal consultations to private individuals: a revered fortune-teller. She becomes possessed by the god, and speaks his words. Sometimes there is a more dramatic physical possession involving the medium running mad and possibly having fits. Some African cultures regard epileptics as prophetic and very holy to this day.⁷⁵ The client does not see her visions nor hear what she hears; she reports this in ambiguous and mysterious language.

In Virgil we find a third kind of consultation, which results in the client seeing hallucinatory visions *himself*. Here the role of the Sibyl is that of Priestess, supervising the ritual and carefully controlling the behaviour, physical state and movement or journey of the votary. At times she is seen as semi-divine herself and accorded worship. This is an interesting development in the history of the identity of Sibyls. In some ways it marks an innovation, since previous accounts accord them reverence but certainly not worship. They were formerly merely a means of knowing or consulting the will of the gods, or acknowledging Necessity, but they were not themselves divine. However, in other ways the last development in which the client himself sees visions marks a return to what I take to be the roots of pre-Sibylline worship of the female Earth Goddesses. The consultations take place in the night. They are necromantic. They involve human or substitutionary animal sacrifice or the enactment of entombment. They are mind-altering: often there are associations with hallucinogenic plants or waters. Virgil bases his fiction on a huge amount of research and reading, and it is very interesting to see how much of what scholars conceive as important aspects of the aboriginal chthonic worship appearing in a work as late as the

⁷⁵ The Turkanas in Kenya. Information derived from personal contact. The belief is widespread.

Aeneid. Even taking into account that Virgil is working from written sources some of which are ancient, this seems to imply a much more widespread survival and knowledge of the chthonic religion than is often suggested. Pausanias's account of his personal submission to the rituals connected with the god Trophonius at Lebadeia, although much later, provides a parallel insight into necromantic and chthonic religion. .⁷⁶ Numerous echoes of the ceremony described in Virgil are found there

The oracle at Lebadeia is described as very old and dated from at least the time of Aristophanes (c.429-385 BC), who referred to it in *Clouds*.⁷⁷ Even Pindar (518-438 BC) may be making a reference to it.⁷⁸ What we understand of the Sibyl's cult in Virgil has to take account of the chthonic necromantic practices of which he had experience or had read about. There is no way to tell whether Virgil's sources were exclusively concerned with Sibylline cults or whether he imported other chthonic religious practices into the narrative to make it more exciting. He may have had before him accounts of the worship at Cumae and Avernus, now lost to us. If that is so, Pausanias's account of the underground oracle centre at Lebadeia provides a particularly useful parallel. Whether the Renaissance scholars who designed the floor at Siena took account of these things is not known but we are not entitled to assume that they did not, especially in view of the magical interests of Pico della Mirandola and his circle in neighbouring and culturally dominant Florence.

LIKELY SOURCES FOR VIRGIL'S KNOWLEDGE OF NECROMANCY

All serious scholars concerned with this topic must be indebted to Georg Luck's *Arcana Mundi*, as I am.⁷⁹ His account makes clear that the surviving works from the ancient

⁷⁶ The account is given in *Greece*, vol. I in the chapter on Boiotia, Book IX, xxxix, 4.

⁷⁷ Benjamin Bickley Rogers, *Aristophanes*, 3 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1973) lines 505-8.

⁷⁸ *Pindar, Paean.8a.17*.

⁷⁹ Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi* (New York: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

Mediterranean world concerned with necromancy written before the time of Virgil are Homer, Hesiod and Aeschylus.

HOMER (before 700 BC) *Odyssey*, Book 11, lines 12-224.

As ever, Virgil's primary source for the narrative in the *Aeneid* is Homer. In Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus, instructed by Circe, the Witch, himself plays the part of the necromancer, conjuring up the dead in order to determine the future and his appropriate course of action. The close textual relationship with the *Aeneid* is clear, but Virgil changes the narrative making it by a stroke, even more dramatic. Instead of conjuring the dead up from the underworld Aeneas, the traveller, journeys there himself, allowing the reader to glimpse Hell.

In Homer the séance takes place in darkness at night. The wanderers travel to the place where the Cimmerians live, where, '*They have a city enwrapped in mist and clouds. Never does the sun shine on them.*'⁸⁰ The account gives details of the magic necromantic practices. In Homer, Circe, the witch, is the knowledgeable instructress, in Virgil this becomes a Sibylline role.

In Homer, the Trojans first dig a ditch. Perhaps this is a symbolic 'cave' or declivity acknowledging the chthonic origins of necromancy. The first sacrifice is a vegetal libation for the dead: milk and honey, wine and water, then barley. Only animals are sacrificed in Virgil's account. Odysseus promises to sacrifice his best heifer and a black ram for Tiresias on his return to his estates. Virgil's sacrifices are to named Chthonic gods, not to the dead themselves as in Homer. In Homer the magic rite insists that the ghosts must drink blood before they can foretell the future. All are eager to do so. In Virgil the onus is on Aeneas to communicate with the dead in Hades. They are astonished to see him. Odysseus sacrifices an unspecified number of sheep, pouring the blood into the trench from whence it is drunk by the spirits, and then burning them. Virgil's very specific account of exactly which animals

⁸⁰ Homer, *Odyssey* 11.15

are sacrificed, to which gods, and in what order and in what manner, comes from another source, possibly even contemporary magical rites. It is too extended a narrative, in a manner that does not help the development of the story in any direct way, to be merely dramatic embellishment. The reader feels that the religious rite is there to relate Aeneas's actions to some perception of a known or likely manner of proceeding, even if 'secret'.

It is to **Pausanias** (fl. AD 150) that we must turn for some notion of the magic and necromantic cults in the Roman world.⁸¹ Although he postdates Virgil by about two hundred years, his electrifying account of putting himself through the terrifying necromantic rites in the cave at Lebadaia and its effect on mind and body, describes a rite of great antiquity. Just as the rituals of the Christian Church remain substantially unchanged from century to century, there is no need to suppose that a similar preservation of action and ceremony did not obtain in the pagan rite Pausanias describes. Any reader seriously interested in these matters should consult Pausanias. Numerous echoes of the ceremony described in Virgil are found there.

HESIOD (c. 700 BC) *Works and Days*, vv. 109-193.

Hesiod gives an account of the origins of the Gods and the Spirit world, but does not address necromantic rites in any detail.

AESCHYLUS (525/4-456 BC) *Persians*, vv. 607-699.

Aeschylus gives a thoroughly interesting account of the queen of the defeated Persians, after Marathon, raising her dead husband to advise on the future conduct of the nation (not to attack Greeks any more!). Here she gives, '*Gifts that soothe the dead*': milk, honey, water and wine but no animal sacrifice is made whatever. Her husband, claiming royal privileges even in Hades, comes to the upper air and addresses her. The Queen herself fulfils the function of Virgil's Sibyl, as female priestess.

⁸¹ The account is given in *Greece*, vol. I in the chapter on Boiotia, Book IX, xxxix, 4.

THE SIBYL IN VIRGIL'S AENEID

Although in the text, for narrative clarity and economy the Sibyl is referred to as the Cumaean Sibyl, Deiphobe, priestess of Apollo and Diana, there are in fact *two* separate accounts of consultations with Sibyls in the *Aeneid*. The first takes place in Cumae in the great Antrum, Cumae being closest to the coast and the first place that Aeneas might come to from the harbour on landing in Italy. The second, adopting a quite different cultic method, takes place at the underground oracle centre at Lake Avernus, which Virgil, echoing Homer, refers to as the entrance to Hades.

Aeneas and the Sibyl at Cumae

Virgil's account of the Sibyl at Cumae begins with a seemingly superfluous account of the pictorial reliefs, said to have been made by Daedalus, on the doors of the 'golden temple' in the Sacred Wood. This is interesting, since in Pausanias's account of the mysteries at Lebadeia, one stage of the mystical ritual in the temple in the Sacred Wood there, is to worship a statue similarly said to have been made by Daedalus. Clearly, Daedalus had come to have an almost deified reputation for sculpture and cunning invention, whoever made the works of art concerned. The description of the form of these doors is strongly reminiscent of Ghiberti's bronze doors for the Baptistery at Florence, and is perhaps their initial literary inspiration. The doors of the Temple of Apollo tell the story of Daedalus's life, containing the story of Theseus and the Minotaur, which is all that Aeneas and the Greeks are given time to look at before Deiphobe urges them on. On one door are representations of the events in Athens, on the other the events in Crete. Doors, representing different stages in the ritual and different levels or kinds of consciousness are a continual motif in the narrative of Aeneas in Book VI, culminating with the obscure reference to the Gates of Ivory and the Gates of

Horn at the end. The ivory doors, 'perfectly made' echo the doors made by Daedalus at the beginning of the Book.⁸²

The connection of the story of Theseus and the Minotaur with the *Aeneid* is at least two-fold: ritualistic and thematic. In the ritual, there is an echo of bull worship and sacrifice in Crete: Aeneas has to sacrifice seven bullocks from a never-yoked herd, i.e. wild bulls, good for the Cretan sport of bull-vaulting. Thematically the story of Theseus and the Minotaur is reminiscent of Aeneas's journey to the underworld. Theseus undergoes a symbolic journey to death and a species of Hell, and unexpectedly *returns* from that place,

⁸² Since the dream-vision tells the truth about Aeneas's future life and gives a genealogy of the *gens Iuliae* which Augustus would wish to be true, it is confusing to be told that Aeneas emerges through the '*Gates of Ivory, perfectly made, but [through which] the Spirits send visions which are false in the light of day*'. I think an explication can be made however. The '*Gates of Horn*', a fairly cheap and commonplace material, that, '*allow an easy exit for dreams which are true*', seem to me to provide a metaphor for dreams which are commonsensical and deal with events which have already happened or are readily recognisable in ordinary life. The *Gates of Ivory*, a much more valuable material, through which Aeneas emerges, are, like the gates of Daedalus at the beginning of the book, 'perfectly made'. That is to say they are works of *art*, employing symbol and metaphor, and operating not at a merely literal level, but as in a work of literature, in which work Aeneas is here remembered. The text does not say that dreams from which the dreamer emerges through the Gates of Ivory are simply false, but that they are, 'false in the light of day'. That is to say they are fantastical (and therefore potentially symbolic) when judged with ordinary common sense or literal-mindedness. The dreams which come to the conscious mind through the beautiful Gate of Ivory are dreams which have rather to be judged on the understanding that the account is literary ('*altera [other gates] candidenti perfecta nitens elephanto*', '**perfectly made**') and that they are thus capable of other than mundane interpretation.

It is also important to notice the seemingly innocent phrase, '*sunt geminae Somni portae*', 'There are twin gates of Sleep'. Virgil is reminding us lightly that he does not take the events at Avernus as in any sense a 'real' miraculous experience in which the boundaries between the physical and spiritual worlds are transgressed, but that he is aware that the experience is one of dream-vision, much like that induced in the minds of the neophytes at Lebadeia as recorded by Pausanias.

through the cleverness of Daedalus. A work of Daedalus therefore may have come to symbolise the escape from death, both since the object is itself timeless and beautiful, *ars longa vita brevis*, and because the name of Daedalus conjures the myth of Theseus and his return from the Minotaur's maze.

The Trojans are interrupted from their contemplation of the story of Daedalus by the arrival of the Sibyl. She urges them to begin the ritual.

The First Ritual: The Sibyl at Cumae as Medium: The Shrine of Phoebus

There are five stages of the Ritual at Cumae.

1. **Sacrificial Offering:** Seven untamed bullocks and seven two-year sheep are sacrificed.
2. **The Approach to the Cave:** This ceremony takes place before the double doors fixed at the entrance to the Cavern. The Sibyl's physical state begins to change; she becomes pale and her face changes. Her hair falls in disarray. Her breast heaves and her voice is magnified. She cries out with the god's inspiration in a loud voice, 'Look the god, the god is here!' This is much the image that appears on the floor of Siena Cathedral. She then instructs Aeneas to invoke the god with both petitions and vows. Unless he does this for himself, the huge doors of the cavern will never be opened to admit him.
3. **The Invocation of the God:** Aeneas invokes Phoebus. He then presents the following petitions:
 - That Troy's (the Trojans') ill-fortune may cease.
 - That the enmity of the gods may cease.
 - He then asks the Sibyl, as if she herself were semi-divine, if the Trojans may found a colony in Latium.

He makes the following vows:

- He will found a Temple for Apollo and Trivia (Hecate).
- He will inaugurate Festival days in honour of Apollo.
- He will build in Latium a shrine in honour of the Sibyl with priests for her service.

This definitely marks her out as divine. (Sibyls were *never* before regarded as divine. However, Virgil lived in an age when Emperors might be deified.) Aeneas asks the Sibyl not to commit the words of her prophecies to leaves (a known method of divination). These might be whirled by the wind to the dismay and confusion of the petitioners. Just as she had instructed him to use his own words in approaching Apollo, he now says, 'I beg you to chant in words of your own,' rather than writing on leaves.

4. **Their entrance into the Cave:** Although Virgil does not describe the main doors opening and the entry into the cavern (he had not quite finished or edited the work at the time of his death) the next event quite clearly takes place *inside* the cave. The interior of the cave is described as having, '*a hundred wide gateways, a hundred mouths from which issue, as many voices, the answers of the Sibyl.*' In Renaissance times travellers were shown a very different cave, one of the many dug in Roman times for military reasons. However, in 1932, Maiuri discovered a system of caves corresponding closely to Virgil's account.⁸³ The cave is at the end of a long passage running parallel to the cliff face, and it has several (though not a hundred) windows cut into it. There is a further, inner, cave in which a Sibyl might have stayed whilst those who wished to supplicate stayed in the outer declivity. In the main cave there are traces of further door frames and shutter sockets which, with the windows, correspond to Virgil's, 'a hundred mouths'. From his description it sounds as though a further inner and invisible door was opened, perhaps by the Sibyl when she was about to prophecy, and the draught thus caused in the system of caverns made the shutters and doors in the public room fly open at once and all together.

⁸³ Parke, p. 80.

5. **The Séance in the Cave:** Of the Sibyl, Deiphobe (her name means, 'god-disliking')

Parke writes that 'there is no suggestion of unwillingness to play her part in the ritual' and that, 'she is inspired by Apollo but not completely possessed by the god.'⁸⁴ I find this odd. Virgil is at some pains to show both that she is possessed and that she is very reluctant to participate in the ritual, as is shown by the name he chooses to give her. The name Deiphobe for the Sibyl is not found before Virgil.

Virgil Aeneid VI (77-80):

At, Phoebi nondum patiens, immanis in antro

bacchatur vates, magnum si pectore possit

excisuisse deum: tanto magis ille fatigat

os rabidum, fera corda domans, fingitque premendo.

Meanwhile, not yet enduring possession by Apollo, the prophetess ran wildly about the cave like a frightful Bacchante, much in the hope to have shaken off the possession of the God from her breast. Yet the more she raves the more he exhausts her foaming mouth, overcoming her wild heart and shaping her to his strong control.

She is like a horse, controlled by the cruel pain of bit and goad *Aeneid VI (100-101)*:

... ea frena furenti

concutit et stimulus sub pectore vertit Apollo.

Apollo furiously jerks the bit and turns the goad to pierce her breast.

Whilst certainly untrue of the first encounter with the Sibyl at Cumae, what Parke says is true of the second encounter with the Sibyl at Avernus. Perhaps in the *post mortem* editing of Parke's work a paragraph to this effect has been lost. The Sibyl goes on to give a

⁸⁴ Parke, p. 79.

prophetic vision of the future in some detail and to grant or refuse the petitions of Aeneas. “*I see war and all the horrors of war. I see the Tiber foaming with blood*”, a reprise of the *Iliad*. In response to his petitions she says:

- That the Trojans’ difficulties will continue.
- That Juno (Hera) will still be hostile to them.
- But that they *will* found a colony in Latium.

‘Such were the words of mystery and dread which the Sibyl of Cumae spoke from her shrine: the cavern made her voice huge as she spoke truth hidden in obscurity.’⁸⁵ It seems that the Sibyl is kinder to Aeneas than Apollo! His requests to Apollo are substantially denied but the request to the Sibyl herself, that he might found a colony in Latium, is granted. The Sibyl then undergoes a violent fit and the séance is over.

AENEAS AND THE SIBYL AT AVERNUS

The Second Ritual: the Sibyl at Avernus as Priestess and demigoddess: the Cimmerian Rite at the Shrine of Hecate

When she is recovered, Aeneas asks her to perform a second ritual at Avernus, and again the motif of Gates is invoked. He tells her that his dying father instructed him to stand at the Cimmerian Sibyl’s gates and ask her to open the Gates of Hades to him. He does this by offering worship to the Sibyl herself, invoking her as *alma*, ‘Kind Lady’, an address to the Sibyl as priestess of Hecate which is an echo of the form of address to the Furies or ‘Kindly Ones’. He supplicates her standing with his hands on the Altar. She promises to do this for him on condition that he fulfils three tasks.

The first is that he must find and return with the Golden Bough. It must be plucked easily, not hacked at. I take this for a metaphor for ripeness. In both this and the account of the hallucinatory experience at Libadeia, plants, meats or waters, in other words ingestible

⁸⁵ Virgil, *The Aeneid*, VI,102 et seq. trans.W. F. Jackson Knight (London: Penguin, 1956)

substances, are carefully referred to. Aeneas is warned that no one can go to Hades and back without finding the magic mistletoe.

The second task is that he must conduct a funeral rite. He does not yet know for whom. He is later to learn of the death of his friend Misenius. One feels the structure of a much older rite, involving human sacrifice, making itself known through the myth of Aeneas, or through the folk tales that it rests on. The motive that the priestess gives him is that of purification, of himself and his fleet, which makes the funeral rite a necessity. Just as in the rite described by Pausanias, purification was a necessary initial step for the neophyte, but one has a sense of an older Earth Goddess's rite in which human sacrifice probably also featured. Just as the story of Abraham and Isaac is a story about this horror passing from a culture or civilisation, ('God does not want this') and the ram caught in the thicket is an adventitious substitutionary victim, so the accidental death of Misenius provides a fortuitous substitute human corpse at precisely the point in the ritual where it would have been needed. It is also, of course, reminiscent of Homer.

The third task is to sacrifice the black sheep as an atonement offering. This is probably the Italic substitutionary animal, imported into the rite at a later date than its inception. It is at the time of sacrifice that we become wholly aware of the chthonic, pre-migration character of this rite. The gods to which sacrifice is made are all either Titans or clear substitutions or identifications of Sky goddesses for earlier Earth deities whose dominion is over death and Hades. This is a much older and grosser form of invocation than that Apolline worship which took place at Cumae. The dominance of black night rather than Apolline sunlight is emphasised throughout. It takes place by Lake Avernus, whose etymology can be explained in terms of the Greek word 'Aornos', 'the birdless'. The landscape is sterile and deadly, poisonous fumes blighting the atmosphere: the sedge is withered from the lake and no birds sing. This is the Cimmerian Rite.

There are three stages to the Cimmerian Ritual:

1. **The Sacrifice:** In fact, more than the single black sheep demanded by the Sibyl is sacrificed. There are four separate sacrifices to different gods for different liturgical purposes:
 - The first is to Hecate, the terrifying ancient chthonic goddess of the underworld with three faces and attendant hounds: goddess of crossroads and necromantic magic, and of child-sacrifice like Medea's. She is probably of Carian origin (South West Asia Minor, like the Sibyls, but south of the Maeander). The Sibyl as Priestess prepares four black bullocks by pouring wine over their foreheads and clipping the bristles growing between the horns. She herself does not kill them but cries out in a loud invocation to Hecate at the moment when others slit their throats and catch the blood in bowls. The dead bullocks are then burned.
 - The second sacrifice is to the Mother of the Furies, Night, and her sister, Earth. This again makes clear the origin of the rite in the ancient chthonic religion. This time it is Aeneas himself who sacrifices a black lamb.
 - The third sacrifice is that of a barren cow to Proserpine, Queen of Hell.
 - The last sacrifice is to Hades, King of the Underworld. It consists of the whole carcasses of fully grown bulls placed in the flames at night.
2. **The Approach to the Cave:** The several Rites of Sacrifice are completed in the nick of time, just before dawn, *primi sub lumina solis et ortus*, and at once the Earth bellows beneath their feet, the mountains move and the shades of the hounds of Hecate appear as the Earth cleaves apart. Aeneas is instructed to enter, bravely, sword erect following the Sibyl. Virgil himself invokes the gods that he reveals, 'Truth sunk in the depths of the earth'.
3. **The Journey through Hades:** One should not let what follows be dimmed by familiarity, it is one of the most famous passages in Latin literature, known since school days and if we are not careful we can survey it as a mere Classical Bestiary, a catalogue of heteromorphs with appended footnotes.

What it really is, is a vivid and horrid phantasmagoria of misshapen mutants, a Bosch painting of the Under-, or subconscious, world, of great intensity, all clustering beneath the Tree of False Dreams. The Sibyl here is Aeneas's clear-sighted guide and spiritual directress. She assures him that they are, 'empty figments of form' and urges him on. She remains his protector, instructor, guide and timekeeper throughout his journey through the Underworld. She guides him on a tour of the Underworld from the depths constraining the imprisoned Titans, upward through the hierarchic catalogue of crimes and criminals, through his reunion with Palinurus and with Dido and with his dead comrades, into the Land of Joy, resting place of the Heroes, and the final prophetic interview with his father with the prediction of the coming glories of the *gens Iulia*, the dynasty of Caesar and Augustus.

In all this we see the apogee of the Sibyl's status in the literary tradition. In the *Aeneid* she is a demi-goddess. Her long career began as Hiera's handmaid and Prophet to the Nations in the seventh or sixth century. It declined to a point when subsumed by Apolline divination she became a medium, almost a mere fortune teller, in Cumae, in the fifth century. She is then finally restored in Virgil to the service of the chthonic female goddesses, and with more than her ancient status, a kind of demi-goddess herself, walking serene through the Kingdoms of Life and Death:

alma, ... potes namquam omnia, nec te

nequiquam lucis Hecate praefecit Avernis (*Aeneid* VI, 117-118)⁸⁶

This connection of the Sibyls with Hecate worship and the uneasy relationship of the Christian Church to pagan and folk religion is relevant to the discussion in the next Chapter of the painted Sibyls at Valgrana.⁸⁷ It is easy to forget that pagan worship of Hecate at crossroads, and indeed pagan temples to Venus and other deities, survived in the remote

⁸⁶ 'Kindly lady... it is in your power to do all things, not without reason did Hecate appoint you mistress of the groves of Avernus.'

⁸⁷ See the section on Valgrana in the following chapter.

mountains of Italy into the 500s at least. There were oral traditions of a strong encounter between Saint Benedict (c. 480 - c. 547) and the Sibyl of the Monte Sibillini, then identified as a priestess of Hecate. After this, the redoubtable Saint advanced upon a still functional temple of Venus in a valley and razed it to the ground. Folk religion degenerating to superstition kept rites and practices alive into the mediaeval period, even when the pagan origins were no longer clearly remembered. Virgil's text gives us some insight into the pagan religion and the practices that may have been preserved in the remoter parts of Italy into the middle ages. The Church opposed these practices with varying degrees of success. For many a century the flesh of dogs would be left at remote crossroads to pacify Hecate. Even in England, Macbeth can refer to her with very little need for explication. She catches the imagination of the populace.

Virgil and the 'Messianic' *Eclogue IV*

We have considered Virgil's carefully researched evocations of dark pagan practices concerned with necromancy and all the black arts totally at variance with the tenets and hopes of Christianity. Why then was he accorded, by Saint Augustine, a place in the City of God, as a good pagan redeemed by his vision of the truth of Christianity to come? The answer lies in the apparent prophetic statement of the central tenets of the Christian faith written before the birth of Christ in Virgil's 'Messianic' *Eclogue IV*.

It was originally written to celebrate the ill-fated marriage of Antony with Augustus's sister Octavia undertaken as part of the Treaty of Brindisi, designed to bring peace between the factions at the end of the civil war resulting from the murder of Julius Caesar. This explains the millennial tone and the looking forward to a new age of peace and prosperity. It speaks of an original crime committed by the Roman people: the murder of Caesar, not Original Sin. It also looks forward to the birth of a new baby who will herald peace and harmony: the hoped-for son of the marriage, uniting Augustus and Antony.

It is clear from its epithet, 'Messianic', however, that readers have always found *Eclogue IV*, the most surprisingly Judeo-Christian work, not simply because of fortuitous

ambiguities in its content, but because of its imagery and tone. The Christian Fathers, Lactantius and Augustine and the mediaeval Church took it as prophesying the birth of Christ and thus a further reason for making the reading of Classical texts legitimate. The Emperor Constantine, who made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, translated it into Greek hexameters, in the Sibylline mode. Virgil's poem states that the last age of Cumaean prophecy has come. It is possible to read the whole poem as a Sibylline prophesy of the Coming of Christ. References to the Virgin, the Serpent, the original deceit of man, millennial references and similarities to Isaiah 9.6, and 11.6 make it inevitable that such a conclusion would be drawn. Lines 4 to 7 appear on the floor of Siena Cathedral, underneath the stone picture of the Sibyl of Cumae.

How then did the Hebraic tone and imagery enter the poetry of Virgil? What were the literary and cultural influences that brought this about?

THE CHANGE IN SIBYLLINE LITERATURE TO A 'CHRISTIANISED' TONE.

During the Hellenistic period, and the period of the pagan Empire, there began the process of change in tone in the Sibylline texts themselves. This was a change to Judeo-Christian diction. The reasons for this, and the later process of selection that resulted in an apparently 'Christian' corpus of literature, will be traced. It is from this corpus that Virgil is likely to have worked.

'THE HEBREW SIBYL'

The influence of Judaism on late Sibylline oracles and their subsequent influence on Virgil

To explain the curious fact that an *Eclogue* written before the time of Christ appears convincingly Christian, we must now consider the advent of 'Sabbe' or 'Sambethe', 'the Jewish Sibyl'.

She is not included in Varro's list of ten Sibyls; he was likely to be wholly unaware of any such texts. She belongs to the parallel tradition of popular oracles, pedalled by travelling

oracle sellers, and to anthologies of oracles, originating in Egypt. She does not come from Palestine. She is fathered by evangelical Jewish Theology upon Literary Imagination in the Library of Alexandria. These oracles were written by Hebrew scholars, resident in Alexandria, as acrostics in Greek hexameters as a conscious literary exercise, rather like modern poets writing sonnets.

The Old Testament has powerful women who act as models for a Hebrew Sibyl: Hannah, Deborah, Miriam, and the Sibyl-like consultation with the Witch of Endor (II Kings 22.14-20). Sambethe, the product of scholarly literary invention of late antiquity, came to exert a pervasive influence upon how Sibyls were perceived and the kinds of things they said in late Latin literature, including Virgil. We shall now examine how that came to be.

Alexandria

It is now necessary to consider the contribution made to the Sibylline corpus by the Library, Museum, and University (by which I mean the collection of outstanding scholars of many disciplines and races assembled and working at the library) at Alexandria. Alexandria itself was of course, founded by Alexander III of Macedon, 'Alexander the Great' (356-323 BC). After his death the huge Greek Empire was divided between two of his victorious generals: Ptolemy, son of his father's mistress Arsinoe, and her husband, Lagus, and Seleucus, a Macedonian noble. The line of Greek rulers established in Egypt was known as the Lagids or Ptolemies and that in Persia, Syria and Asia as Seleucids.

Strabo says that Aristotle (who was Alexander's tutor) was the first collector of books and taught the kings of Egypt how to arrange a library.⁸⁸ This can only mean that a properly organised library, absolutely necessary to using Aristotelian methods of enquiry, was assembled in the Lyceum, the school he founded in the grove of Apollo Lyceius and the Muses. This was where he taught in the covered court or *peripatos* from which the Peripatetics took their name. That library, the prototype for all the great libraries of Europe,

⁸⁸ Greek historian and geographer c. 64 BC-after 21 AD

contained his collection of manuscripts, maps, and probably a 'Museum', in the temple of the Muses, containing objects illustrative of his lectures, especially the Zoological lectures. Alexander is said to have funded the collection and to have given orders that hunters and fishermen throughout the empire should report any matters of scientific interest. The next great library was founded in Alexandria. History does not forgive Antony for burning this Library during the battle of Actium. It was the repository of so many treasures of Greek literature, now irretrievably lost.

Ptolemy I, Soter (c. 376-282 BC), Alexander's general, the first of the Ptolemies, wrote the best biography of Alexander, based on military records and personal experience. His son by Berenice I, Ptolemy II, Philadelphus (308-246 BC), built the huge lighthouse, the Pharos, the wonder of the Ancient world and founded the Library and the Museum at Alexandria.

Ptolemy II's great-great-grandson, Ptolemy VI, Philometor, the sixth of the Macedonian kings of Egypt (c. 184 BC-145 BC) succeeded to the throne in 180 BC. He had a stormy and difficult reign but throughout it encouraged the development of scholarship.

Ptolemy VI beat back the attacks of his fellow Greek, Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, (reigned 175-163 BC), Seleucid King of Syria and Persia. The attacks were mounted in 170, 169 and finally in 168, when Rome intervened on Egypt's side, in the same year that it had conquered Macedon at the Battle of Pydna.⁸⁹ This put an end to the Seleucid threat. It also meant that intellectual contact and interchange were established with Rome.

This was the period during which the Biblical Book of Daniel was written. I Maccabees and Daniel, rightly read, give us the reasons why, in the reign of Ptolemy Philometor, a centre of Jewish scholarship, which would be of immense importance, was established in Alexandria. Antiochus ruled the Holy Land and Ptolemy Philometor had

⁸⁹ Egypt had wisely declared herself an ally of Rome in 196 when the Syrians, under Antiochus's father, had invaded Thrace.

offered a place of refuge to Jewish refugees fleeing from Antiochus's persecution, particularly scholars. He introduced large numbers of Jews into Egypt and allowed them to occupy high office in the state. A number of Jewish scholars, who would, in modern times, be seen as a faculty of Hebrew History and Literature, were established in the famous Library. II Maccabees is a letter to these Jewish scholars from scholarly Jews suffering in Palestine.

The Jewish scholars in Alexandria were not narrow or exclusive in their academic interests. They were happy to absorb scholarship derived from Greek sources. Ptolemy Philometor's tutor was a Jew, whom the Christian fathers recognised as a peripatetic philosopher, Aristobulus. Aristobulus dedicated a book to Ptolemy Philometor in which he applied the method of allegorical interpretation to the writings of Moses. It is clear that Jewish intellectuals at the time were perfectly acquainted with the literary methods of the Classical pagan scholars and were keen both to learn from them and to apply them to study of their own sacred texts. They were also eager to promote their own religious and cultural view to a much wider world through the medium of Greek.⁹⁰ They carried out the work of translating the Jewish scriptures into Greek in the reign of Ptolemy Philometor. Before Philometor's reign, Demetrius the Chronographer had already attempted to align the events of Jewish history with recorded Greek history.

At Alexandria then, an influential group of Hebrew scholars worked and came into contact with Greek literature, including the *Sibylline Oracles*. As Parke points out, it is clear that they were perfectly willing to use the language and literature of their Pagan neighbours for the purpose of giving expression to their own culture.⁹¹ It is at this point that Sambethe, the *Sibylla Hebraica*, appears. After the burning of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Augustus did not send envoys out as far as Alexandria. However, at some time later, the oracles of the Jewish Sibyl were absorbed into Sibylline literature circulating round the

⁹⁰ See Parke, p. 6.

⁹¹ See Parke, p. 6.

Mediterranean, including Rome, and were eventually collected into the *Oracula Sibyllina* collated by the Byzantine scholar in the sixth century. As they appear in the third book the characteristics of the Jewish oracles are that they are bitterly hostile to idolatry and the worship of animals but approving of Alexandria and its rulers: a very different tone from that later shown towards Rome and its Emperors.

The Jewish writers exploited to the full the fact that Jewish literature dated further back than that of the Greeks when translating Hebrew works into the Greek language. The Jewish Prophetess in the third book of the *Oracula Sibyllina* describes herself as the daughter-in-law of Noah, and so can narrate the history of the Tower of Babel and foretell the Exodus.⁹² The Greek and Jewish public accepted that the 'accurate' prophecies made from the vantage point of such early origins proved the validity of the Sibyl.

The Jewish Sibyl continued from the Creation, through World History to prophesy a general Doom. Greek Philosophy had debated the question as to whether the Cosmos was finite. By the Hellenistic period of Ptolemy Philometor, the Stoics, following Empedocles had imagined an *Ekpyrosis* in which the universe was consumed by fire, a vision given expression so many hundreds of years later in the *Dies Irae*. However, there was no element of Judgement between good and evil in the idea of an *Ekpyrosis*. The Day of the Lord, or the Day of Judgement, when Israel would be vindicated, was a Jewish idea. The concept was present in early Prophets but was developed in the Book of Daniel where, in an apocalyptic vision, it became closely identified with Jewish hopes in contemporary history. It was at this period in the second century BC that it began to include some notion of the dead being raised to life for Judgement. The Judeo-Christian apocalyptic literature that followed developed this idea until it became a mental picture influential in Christian thought. The Last Judgement formed no part of the pagan models for the Jewish Sibyl.

⁹² See Parke, p.7 and *Or. Sib.* 3.97 (Babel); 248 (Exodus); 268 (Babylonian Captivity); 823 (Daughter of Noah).

However, unlike his models, the Jewish Sibyllist did not deal only in Doom. It was part of his Hebraic tradition to believe that after the awful destruction should come the Golden Age for the justified People of God. Isaiah had given this wonderful expression, centuries earlier.⁹³ The Sibyllist paraphrases Isaiah in words that are echoed on the floor of Siena Cathedral centuries later. It is this close acquaintance with, and absorption of the cadences of Isaiah, so familiar to modern Christians in the festival of nine lessons and Carols at Christmas, that so profoundly influences the thought and cadences of the evangelical Jewish Sibyllist at Alexandria. This is no post-Christian tampering and fakery. Neither is it dishonest. When the Jewish poet wishes to convey his culture and religion to a wider, non-Hebrew, world, where Greek is the international language, he chooses the form of Sibylline hexameters, because that sets up an expectation as to serious content and form entirely suitable to the message he intends to convey. This is a literary convention and not meant to deceive the reader as to the antiquity of the poem.

Later scholars however, assembling the Sibylline Oracles after the fire of 80 BC, Church Fathers and scholars of the early Christian years, and subsequently Renaissance scholars, mistook these Greek hexameters composed in Alexandria in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, for the utterance of the ancient Sibyls. This is an understandable and honest mistaking about a language not their own, written by a foreign author whose mother tongue is not Greek. It does account however for the so-called 'Christianisation' of the Sibylline Oracles, which was to play such a part in the Renaissance legitimisation of Classical (and therefore pagan) literature and culture. Without this the Renaissance could never have happened. It is the rhetorical reason for the appearance of the ten Varronian Sibyls on the floor of Siena Cathedral

⁹³ See particularly chapters 9 and 11.

The Hebraic influences on Virgil's 'Messianic' *Eclogue* IV.

Isaiah 9.6; For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.⁹⁴

Comparing this chapter of Isaiah with the Messianic *Eclogue*, we find striking parallels in the following lines 7 and 13-17:

iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto.

Now a new child descends from high Heaven.

ille deum vitam accipiet diuisque videbit

permixtos heroas et ipse videbitur illis,

pacatumque reget patriis virtutibus orbem.

He shall receive the life divine, and see the Gods

Mingling with the Heroes, and they shall see Him,

And He shall rule the world made peaceful by his Father's virtues.

Isaiah 11. 6:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

c.f. The Messianic *Eclogue*, line 22:

Nec magnos metuent armenta leones

Neither shall the herd fear the might of the lions.

Lines 4-7 appear on the floor of Siena Cathedral attributed to the Sibylla Cumana:

⁹⁴ The Authorised Version of the Bible is used throughout.

Ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas

magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo.

iam redit et virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna,

iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto

Now the last Age of the Cumaean oracle has come

The great cycle of the Ages is born afresh

The Virgin too returns; the reign of Saturn returns,

Now a new progeny descends from Heaven on high.

H. W. Parke remarks that Virgil had been influenced indirectly by the Messianic joys foretold by the Hebrew prophets, "Some Sibylline version of the Jewish prophecies had guided him to produce his allegorical poem with its strange fusion of eastern and western elements."⁹⁵ However, if that is so, one must show how Virgil could have come across the Hebrew Sibyl now recorded in the third book of the *Oracula Sibyllina*, in Rome.

Parke avers that it is usual to argue that Virgil became acquainted with Hebrew Scriptures and Sibylline oracles because his patron, Pollio, to whom he devotes a panegyric section in the Messianic Eclogue, was interested in Herod and Judaism.⁹⁶ However, there is other evidence for Virgil's having had access to the Jewish Sibyl.

Evidence that Virgil could have access to the Alexandrian Jewish writing: Alexander Polyhistor (fl. after 88 BC)

The work of Polyhistor, 'multifarious researcher' is here relevant. Alexander Polyhistor was brought to Rome as a captive slave, a prisoner-of-war, at the time of Sulla's victory in the first war with Mithridates the Great of Pontus, in 88 BC. He made diligent

⁹⁵ Parke, p. 14.

⁹⁶ It is fair to point out that D. Braund has attacked this view in the *Critical Quarterly* 33 (1983), saying that there is insufficient evidence of such interests. See Parke, p.150, f.n. 17, for bibliography.

researches into secondary sources written in Greek, and chronicled the histories of the various Asiatic peoples, including the Jews, conquered by Pompey, Caesar and Antony, south and east of his native Miletus, southernmost of the Ionian cities. His *Chaldaean History* is significant in the introduction of the Jewish Sibyl to Rome.

After reproducing the Babylonian version of the Flood narrative, Polyhistor inserts an account of the Tower of Babel, citing the Sibyl as his source. His prose paraphrase corresponds closely with the passage on that topic in Book III of the *Oracula Sibyllina*. The Sibyl proclaims that she is the daughter of Noah, and that she remembers the events connected with the tower of Babel. The narrative follows the Hebrew scriptures very closely. This close and prolonged paraphrase of Book III shows that *Oracula Sibyllina* had reached Rome from Alexandria by the mid-first century BC, and was therefore accessible at the time of Virgil's maturity.

THE POPULAR TRADITION OF LATIN SIBYLLINE ORACLES

After Augustus had removed the official Sibylline Books, recreated after the fire, to his Temple of Apollo on the Palatine next to his Palace, he turned his attention to the difficult problem of control of the unofficial Sibylline oral tradition of the streets of Rome: the unauthorised circulation of oracles. When Lepidus at last died in 12 BC, he was able to assume the role of *pontifex maximus*, and thus the control of religion as well as the secular state.

Some indication of the sheer strength and influence of this popular tradition, unregarded by scholars then and now, may be gained from what then happened. As *pontifex maximus* Augustus issued an edict that, 'since much empty matter has been published under a famous name,' all prophetic books, (*fatidici libri*) whether in Greek or Latin, were to be handed in to the *praetor urbanus*.⁹⁷ Those books which were handed in were examined, those

⁹⁷ See Parke, p. 142.

deemed authentic were confiscated and presumably added to the state collection in the Temple of Apollo and those that were of doubtful authorship were burned: perhaps the first instance of the Roman pontiff placing a ban on books. Burning seems to be the recurrent fate of the Sibylline books, both 'authentic', whatever that is understood to mean, and inauthentic. The astounding fact that more than two thousand volumes were burned gives an indication of the strength of what I have chosen to call the Popular Tradition, largely ignored by scholars. Although Augustus's act was one of great destruction, one should remember that it was not as absolute a destruction as that of the Academic or Patrician Sibylline Tradition at the burning of the Temple of Jupiter. The folk and oral tradition, if less stable than single identified written texts, is far more tenacious. The burning of the books went on only in Rome.

Attempts by the powerful patrician interest to suppress or subsume the popular tradition of Sibylline utterance are a repeated pattern. In AD 19 in the reign of Tiberius the populace were disturbed by a Sibylline verse which ran,

When thrice three hundred years have passed over,

*The Romans shall perish through civil war and Sybaritic Folly.*⁹⁸

Once a mood is identified and vividly expressed among the common people, it gathers momentum and this may threaten the powerful. Tiberius did all he could to suppress the popular Sibylline oracles. He declared the verses to be spurious and again called in all the books of popular oracles. Like Augustus, he declared that it was illegal for a private citizen to own such books. No doubt, human nature being what it is, this gave the ownership of such works a tremendous glamour. Tiberius had those that were given up examined and again the process of adding 'authentic' oracles to the State Archive and burning the rest was enacted.

He was however completely unsuccessful in suppressing the oracle I have quoted above since it was revived in AD 64, after the fire of Rome. The population again were

⁹⁸ See Parke, p. 142.

disorientated and shocked and blamed Nero. 'Sybaritic folly' seems an apt term for Nero's palace culture. Perhaps the idea that Nero's dynasty, or simply the whole structure of the then government, might be removed or changed was in the mind of the public, an outcome devoutly to be wished if never to be overtly expressed. Again the popular 'Sibylline' utterance gave expression to the feelings of the plebs. To suppress the agitation, Nero issued a statement that these verses could not be found in the Sibylline Books, which had just been consulted on the subject of the fire.

As Parke points out the people were not put off.⁹⁹ Another Sibylline verse was in currency on the streets a significant line of which ran:

Last of the sons of Aeneas a matricide shall reign.

This prophecy was proved to be correct, probably because it was made after Nero had had his mother, Agrippina, murdered in AD 59.

Suetonius, who was born c. AD 69, and was therefore close to these events and presumably able to speak to those who remembered them, reports that the *plebs urbana* was given to making up and circulating verses about Nero. However these were more usually satirical rather than prophetic:

Alcmaeon, Orestes, and Nero are brothers,

Why? Because all of them murdered their mothers.

This latter was so popular that later authors attributed it to the Delphic Pythia as an Apolline oracle which illustrates, in my view, how many of the 'Sibylline Oracles' may have come into being. Suetonius cites other examples of popular street verse:

Aeneas the Trojan hero

Carried off his aged father

His remote descendant, Nero

⁹⁹ See Parke, p.143.

Likewise carried off (or rather

Let Death carry off) his mother:

*Heroes worthy of each other.*¹⁰⁰

It appears that again we see the popular Sibylline tradition, saying the unsayable and being used to express what the plebeians really feel and think in desperate times of helpless anxiety and insecurity. The popular tradition expresses fears not to be articulated by individuals, either from fear of reprisals or from a reluctance to face them as a potential reality.

The Essential Qualities of Sibylline Oracles

If the utterance at this period is 'Sibylline', four things are true:

1. the saying cannot be identified with a living human individual, i.e. it is not Sibyl's personal opinion or aphorism, her slant on current or past events. It has a universal and god-like authority;
2. the oracle expresses the worst fears of the people;
3. the oracle has a timeless quality, appears ancient or has a large span of time in its field of reference;
4. the events in the prophecy may be averted by ceasing evil behaviour or taking the right religious and liturgical course of action.

These are precisely the qualities preserved when at a later date the Popular Tradition of Sibylline Oracles was subsumed into the Christian liturgy, a process to be examined in the next section.

¹⁰⁰ These translations are from Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. by Robert Graves, (London: Penguin, 1957) p.231-2.

CHAPTER II: SIBYLS IN THE CHRISTIAN AGE

H. W. Parke's immensely detailed and scholarly account of the Sibyl in the early Christian era is the authoritative text on this subject.¹⁰¹ I do not attempt to reflect all of the information there in this Chapter. The purpose here is to identify the writers whose ideas and works most affected the Humanists in the early Renaissance. This chapter is not an attempt at a full survey of all writers concerned with Sibyls in this period, for which the reader is directed to Parke.¹⁰²

THE ATTITUDE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH TO SIBYLLINE ORACLES

In 313, when Constantine declared Christianity and not paganism to be the official religion of the Roman State, the Empire did not simply change its whole culture and see its history from a Judeo-Christian perspective. It is to be expected that, apart from ceasing actively to persecute Christians, most citizens changed their religious understanding and practice not one whit. Their education, habits of thought, aesthetic, moral and cultural values cannot have changed overnight. The Classical literary education of the patrician gentleman, Christian or pagan, remained the study of Cicero, Horace, Virgil, Ovid, and the Literary Pantheon, along with a respect for the utterances of the Sibyls.

It is helpful to trace the attitude of the Christian Church to Classical literature. There were two views of its status that remained in tension throughout the early Christian Era, and indeed throughout the whole of the Middle Ages. They were essentially irreconcilable. One, entirely negative, held that any and all reading of pagan texts (i.e. the whole corpus of Classical literature) was contrary to the vocation of the faithful Christian. This view was put forward by St Jerome (342-420). There were huge difficulties implicit in this. Had so extreme a view become wholly accepted, the culture of Western Europe might have been

¹⁰¹ Parke, Chapter 8, 'The Sibyl in Christian Literature.'

¹⁰² See also Appendix 1 for a full list of Greek and Latin authors mentioning Sibyls.

inestimably impoverished. St Jerome's own powerful Latin, exemplified in his 'Vulgate' translation of the Bible, was the result of the years of study devoted to Cicero and the great literature of the Roman civilisation of which he was a conventionally educated patrician citizen.

The positive view of Classical literature argued that Christianity was the fulfilment of Roman philosophy and culture in a final purified and enlightened form, not its negation. This version makes particular reference to the Italian or Albunean Sibyl's prophecy of the coming of Christ because it places Christianity as an essentially *Roman* religion. If Roman Classical Sibyls were as much his prophets as Isaiah and the Hebrew prophets, then Christianity was the fulfilment of the Roman religion as well as that of the Hebrews. This positive view of Sibyls is first put forward powerfully by Lactantius (245-c. 325) in the last years of the persecution of Diocletian and the first of freedom under Constantine. It is reasserted by St Basil of Caesarea (c. 330-379) in the *Address to Young Men on Reading Greek Literature*, a work not often acknowledged by scholars writing on the topic of Sibyls, and famously by St Augustine of Hippo (354-430), especially in *City of God*, written 413-26 in response to the fall of Rome to Alaric in 410.

The Church could mediate between these two apparently opposite views by asserting a 'special case' argument about the Sibyls, as presented by St Augustine, that they could *not* be considered as truly pagan since they prophesied the birth of Christ. The same argument was put forward as to Virgil's being included in the *City of God* because of his prophetic grasp of the Christian message as evinced in the *Messianic Eclogue*. However, the tension between the two views of Classical literature was never fully or finally resolved and continued down the centuries. In the early years of the *quattrocento* Pope Martin V, Odo Colonna, could still refer to classical texts as, 'the literature of the damned'.¹⁰³ At this point the Sibyls reappeared as an important justification for its study.

¹⁰³ See Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* (CN: Yale, 1997)

Renaissance scholars broadened the view that the Sibyls were a 'special case', a proto-Christian Classical literature, by reasoning, as had been the tacit assumption of some earlier scholars, that if Classical Greek and Latin philosophy and literature could have presentiments of Christian truths, then their early insights were as valid for the Christian to consider as were those of the pre-Christian Jewish prophets and poets. This view left room for the efforts of such Renaissance scholars as Ficino and Pico della Mirandola to make a synthesis of a Neoplatonist view of the universe and the revealed Christian faith, thus harmonising the two most important elements in the history and culture of the Italic people: Classical civilisation and Christianity. Nonetheless, this remained very controversial. Pico della Mirandola's books were finally placed under interdict by Innocent VIII (reigned 1484-92), Giovanni Battista Cibo, an intellectual nonentity and enthusiastic persecutor of witches in Germany. This makes the placing of a whole choir of Sibyls on the floor of Siena Cathedral in 1482 a brave and positive statement, whose survival was in no sense guaranteed.

THE ACADEMIC SIBYLLINE TRADITION: THE PLACE OF SIBYLLINE AND OTHER CLASSICAL LITERATURE IN THE DEVELOPING CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Lactantius (c. 245-c. 325): Classical Source for the Sibyls of Siena and Rimini.

We have already had occasion to refer to Lactantius as the source of Varro's list of ten Classical Sibyls, preserved in the *Divine Institutes*. He was born in North Africa, like St Augustine. He was appointed by Diocletian, to the equivalent of a Chair of Rhetoric in Nicomedia, in North Western Asia Minor. Nicomedia was the capital of Diocletian's Eastern Empire, located near and immediately to the West of Byzantium just the other side of the Bosphorus. By 303, whilst teaching there, Lactantius had converted to Christianity and was dismissed by the Emperor forthwith. As an old man he returned to Imperial favour: Constantine appointed him as tutor to his son Crispus.

The *Divine Institutes* of Lactantius are the literary source of most of the text on the carved Sibyl Cycles at Siena and Rimini. During the period in which the *Divine Institutes* were conceived, Diocletian was Emperor (284-305) immediately before Constantine's father. The work was written between 305 and 313, in the context of the last great persecution of Diocletian, and the first years of Christian emancipation, when Constantine declared Christianity to be the official Roman religion.

Lactantius's purpose was to convert the Roman upper classes to Christ. Aristocrats saw Christianity as the religion of slaves, immigrants and the lower classes and had therefore rejected it partly on snobbish grounds. There were two other reasons that militated against Christianity in their view. The first was that the Gospels are written substantially in demotic, the popular language of the streets, not polished, Classical, Greek. The second is that any aristocratic class, doing well out of the Establishment and its religion, has affection for, and attachment to, its social and religious conventions, mores and history. Lactantius's task can be likened to the difficulty of converting the English Anglican, upper class Establishment to Rastafarianism. The *Divine Institutes* were an attempt to woo the upper classes by writing in a Latin style so perfect that he was eventually called, 'the modern Cicero' and by showing that the Sibyls, recognised potentially as legitimate and important prophetesses by such Romans, had prophesied the coming of Christ and Christianity. Lactantius's argument was that Christianity was not a replacement of the previous religion but rather its fulfilment. The same argument was used, with Lactantius as authority, to legitimise the reading of pagan Classical texts in the Renaissance and is a significant part of the rhetoric and meaning of the nave floor at Siena. *Divine Institutes* was one of the first books printed in Italy in 1465.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴See R. H. Hobart Cust, *The Pavement Masters of Siena, 1369-1562* (London: George Bell, 1901), p.

Eusebius of Caesarea (260-340)

Eusebius was the historian of the early Church and the Emperor Constantine's Chaplain. In 335 he is said to have written the *Oration* which the Emperor Constantine delivered. He appended this to his *Life of Constantine*. In the *Oratio Constantini ad Sanctorum Coelum* Book VIII, he cites the Erythraean Sibyl's prophecy of the coming of Christ, derived from the second collection of Sibylline Books, made after the Temple fire had destroyed the originals.¹⁰⁵

THE REMOVAL OF THE EMPEROR FROM ROME AD 330.

In 330 Constantine moved the capital of the Empire to Byzantium, situated at the narrowest point of the Bosphorus, and thus at the bridge between the Western and Eastern Empires. He intended to call it, 'New Rome' but in fact it became 'Constantinople'. In the future this would be the capital of the Eastern Empire and the chief seat of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Rome or Ravenna would be the capital in the West. However, at the time the removal of the court to Byzantium had a disastrous effect on the intellectual, cultural and economic life of Rome, since those with money, power or talent, or hopes of these things, went to Byzantium. The Patriarch there was to see himself as the primal pontiff since he was at the hub of the Empire, the point where the road from East to West crossed the dividing waters. At Constantine's death however, the Empire was again divided between his three remaining sons. (Constantine had put his eldest son Crispus, to death, suspecting him of treason, in 326, the year after his tutor, Lactantius, died.) Eventually, through further political wrangling, the lands under Roman rule were again divided into two, the Eastern and Western Empires, each with its own Emperor and eventually with its own Church.

The ancestral pagan gods of the Romans having no resonance for Gauls and African tribesmen alike, Constantine had seen Christianity as a unifying force in the Empire,

¹⁰⁵ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1975)

throughout which it had spread. Christianity now encircled the Mediterranean. In Fisher's resonant sentence, 'The Mediterranean was a Christian lake.'¹⁰⁶

THE EARLY FATHERS

It was at this period that the Church, Eastern and Western, turned its attention to its own inner doctrinal unity. The first great Council of the whole church was held in Nicaea in 325. This promulgated the first creed, the first version of the Nicene Creed, as a counter to Arianism.¹⁰⁷ Arianism was the belief that Christ, whilst superior to mankind and the angels, was inferior to God the Father. (Constantine lived and died an Arian Christian.) It was also in this period that Athanasius, Bishop of Nicaea, put together the Canon of the Bible in 367. However, it was not till 382 that this was officially recognised by the Church in a synod in Rome, influenced by Pope Damasus, and his new secretary, St Jerome.¹⁰⁸

St Jerome c. 347-420 (Eusebius Hieronymus)

Jerome had just arrived from Constantinople having studied under the great Greek theologian, Gregory of Nazianzus (329-89). He was born in Dalmatia, the other side of the Adriatic from Ravenna, in what is now Turkey, of well-to-do Christian parents. He was educated in Rome, had learned Theology and Greek in Antioch and Hebrew, with much difficulty, from a Rabbi, in the Syrian desert, east of Antioch. Pope Damasus invited Jerome to translate the Bible from the infelicitous Latin and demotic Greek in which it circulated at the time. There were several Latin versions of the Gospels; these he revised. Jerome's scholarship was unsurpassed. His Latin was Classical in its purity, the product of dedicated

¹⁰⁶ H.A.L. Fisher, *A History of Europe* 2 vols, vol 1, 6th. edn, The Fontana Library (London: Collins, 1965), p. 36.

¹⁰⁷ The 'Nicene Creed' as used by Anglicans and Catholics is really the refined 'Constantinopolitan Nicene Creed' of 381.

¹⁰⁸ It was not till 692 at the 'Quinisext' ('Fifth/Sixth') Council of the Church that the Canon was finally closed.

and delighted study of Cicero, Virgil, Horace and others, to such an extent that constant echoes of them are to be found throughout his writings. It was at this time that he began the great work on the 'Vulgate', i.e. the 'common text' of the Bible, which gave him, down the centuries, a large measure of authority within the Church. Paradoxically, it is the Ciceronian tone of that translation that has profoundly affected the doctrine of the Church and the Pope in Catholic Christendom. The great statement: '*Tu es Petrus et ... tibi dabo claves Regni Caelorum*', '*Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church. I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*',¹⁰⁹ has an absolute finality and a legal ring to it, couched in the Latin style influenced by the great lawyer, Cicero. It appears to be the institution of a statutory office, not the words of Christ to an individual. The status of that prophetic utterance was argued in Catholic Christendom between Conciliarists and the Pope throughout the Renaissance and Reformation. The tone and attitude of Authority has much to do with the high Ciceronian sonorities of Jerome's Vulgate, the vehicle for the transmission of Christianity, conditioning Catholic culture.

Jerome's reversal of Lactantius's view that Classical literature is compatible with Christianity

It was in Antioch in 374, aged about thirty-eight, that Jerome had the famous dream that was to change his whole attitude to Classical literature and by his influence that of the Church. He tells of this in Letter XXII, written to Eustochium, one of the coterie of rich female disciples that he gathered unto himself in Rome.¹¹⁰ Much satirised and becoming increasingly unpopular for this exclusivity, Jerome continued to hold study groups at the palace of the rich Marcella, on the Aventine. Here, he and the women came to study Hebrew and to spend time in earnest prayer, and the singing of psalms. He encouraged them to

¹⁰⁹ Matthew 16.18-19

¹¹⁰ See St Jerome, *Select Letters*, 6th.edn, trans. by F. A. Wright, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.125, The Letter on the Virgin's Profession was written in AD 384.

embrace an asceticism in their palaces whose exactions were so severe (we would probably now call it anorexia) that Eustochium's sister, Blesilla, died of it. Eustochium and her mother, Paula, the heiress of the great Aemilian family, held it not one whit against him. However, at the accession of the next Pope who was insecure about Jerome's intellect and ascetic rigour, having lost his patron and protector Damasus, Jerome was openly satirised and eventually run out of Rome by the mob. It was angry at Blesilla's death, which, it was believed, was caused by her prolonged fastings and penances. 'The monks to the Tiber' was the cry of the mob.¹¹¹ Jerome not only sailed away from Rome but left Europe for the last thirty-four years of his life, eventually settling in Bethlehem. There, Paula and Eustochium joined him, using the Aemilian fortune to found a monastery over which he presided and three convents directed by Paula. He spent the rest of his life in study and exegesis.

Jerome's letter to Eustochium (Letter XXII) relates the formative dream-vision experience he had which altered his attitude to the reading of Classical literature so radically and, because of his great influence and compelling eminence, that of the Church for centuries to come. In 374 he had gone to Antioch to study Theology and learn Greek. While there, he suffered a desperate fever in the middle of Lent which he was not expected to survive, indeed preparations were being made for his funeral. "Carried up in the Spirit," he found himself before the final Judgement Seat. Upon being asked his condition, he replied that he was a Christian. The terrible reply came, "*mentiris; Ciceronianus es, non Christianus.*" (You lie; you are a Ciceronian, not a Christian.)¹¹² He was lashed with a whip, the marks of which he bore on his body even after he woke. Bystanders pleaded that the terrible Judge have mercy on the sins of his youth. Terrified, he made a vow never to read or

¹¹¹ See entry for St Jerome in Donald Attwater, *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965)

¹¹² See *Select Letters of St Jerome*, trans. F. A. Wright, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), p. 128

possess “gentile books” again, and if he did, that he would regard such an act as a denial of Christ. He then ‘*returned to the upper world*’, ‘*revertor ad superos*’.¹¹³

In the succeeding centuries however, the reading of Greek scientific works, medical texts particularly Aristotle, and interestingly Ciceronian rhetoric was regarded as perfectly licit in the Western Church but Jerome’s influence made the reading of the Philosophic and quasi-religious works of Plato, Greek and Latin secular plays and epics regarded with suspicion. Jerome’s Vulgate had contributed significantly to the “Romanitas”, the Latinisation of the Western Church but, for centuries to come, some of the great works of Greek and Latin literature fell into desuetude and were effectively lost to Western Europe till the Renaissance.

There was an opposing view to that of Jerome, voiced strongly in the early centuries, and it was to these early theologians that the Classicists of the Renaissance had recourse. The authority always adduced in this connection is St Augustine who wrote quoting the Sibylline Oracles in the in *City of God*. He cites the Sibyls as harbingers of Christ’s coming, and tries to translate the famous Greek Sibylline acrostic into Latin. However, whilst I shall discuss this in detail, it is important to note that he was not, as is often claimed, the first apologist for a manner of reading Classical literary texts and myth, the Italic cultural inheritance, by the

¹¹³ Piero della Francesca’s mysterious picture, often called ‘The Flagellation’ is usually assumed to illustrate the flagellation of Christ. I am grateful to Professor Peter Davidson and Dr Jane Stevenson for the illuminating idea that this in fact records the Dream of St Jerome. In the foreground a youth stands between two opposing figures, in the background a mature man with a beard is whipped before a Judge. The spatial difference could be a metaphor for time. In the foreground the youthful Jerome stands between the opposing figures of a Doctor of the Church on his right and Cicero on his left, Right Doctrine opposing Classical paganism. The youth faces towards the Doctor but his body language and stance ally him to Cicero. The crooked arm is almost an invitation to walk arm in arm. In the background is the subsequent fate of the youth when he comes to man’s estate: a public flogging before the Judge.

devout Christian. He was also not the first authority to whom the Renaissance scholars appealed for a justification of their engagement with Classical pagan texts. The Edinburgh Manuscript, (MS 120 [previously Laing III 141 misc. XV sec.] see 35r-37r.) containing an early Renaissance translation of part of St Basil's work, has much to tell us of the appeal to Christian theologians by the early Humanists.

St Basil the Great (c. 330-79)

St Basil the Great was Bishop of Caesarea and one of the four great Greek Doctors of the Orthodox Church. He was born five years after Lactantius died and seventeen before the birth of St Jerome. He was an older contemporary of both Jerome and Augustine (354-430) and a friend of Gregory of Nazianzus, Jerome's theology teacher. He was founder of Eastern Orthodox communal monasticism. He was one of the earliest of the Greek Church Fathers to express a view of Classical literature that allowed Christians to receive the traditional Roman rigorous intellectual and literary training. His letter to his nephew, in fact a general address to the young, *Ad Adulescentes*, points out the manly and moral lessons that may be derived from the reading of Classical literature. This is contained in the Edinburgh MS. immediately before the list of Sibyls. The position he adopted was however, also adopted by a Doctor of the Latin Church who could not have read his works: Saint Augustine was the only one amongst the early Christian philosophers never to have a word of Greek.

St Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

The great Latin Doctor of the Church was born in North Africa, in Numidia at Thagaste and died at Hippo, in what is now Algeria, son of a very dominant mother, Monica. He was sent to Carthage to finish his education. There he lived devotedly with the mother of his beloved son, Adeodatus. He then went to lecture in Rhetoric in Rome and subsequently in Milan, where he heard the Christian Neoplatonist preaching of St Ambrose. He agonised inwardly about the choice between marriage and a worldly career and a total dedication to God. His decision was made in a garden when his eye lit upon Romans 13.12-14. He was then baptised with his son, Adeodatus, on Easter Eve, 387. He went back to Africa where he

founded a monastic community and became the exemplary Bishop of Hippo. He left a huge corpus of writings, including over 500 sermons, which have influenced Western Christian thought profoundly. The *Confessions* is an autobiography till the point of his conversion in 387, which meditates on a radical doctrine of Salvation by Grace. *City of God* was written after 410, when Alaric the Goth had sacked Rome. He was appalled and felt that the centre and hub of Christianity was destroyed. This prompted him to meditate on the Heavenly and permanent City, as opposed to its temporal correlative, and place his aspirations there.

In *De Doctrina Christiana* he had spoken of a literary culture subordinated to the Bible. However, in the later *De Civitate Dei* (413-26) he considers the fate of the good pagan and the role of the Sibyls in the plan of Salvation.

In *De Civitate Dei* Book XVIII Ch. 23, Augustine addresses the question of the Sibyls. He asserts that the Erythraean Sibyl lived at the time of Romulus, although he acknowledges that some writers date her earlier at the time of the Trojan War. He quotes a Latin rendering of the 'Holy Acrostic', in which, in Greek, the initial letters of each line read, 'IESOUS XREISTOS THEOU UIOS SOTER'. This is a frightening poem about the Last Judgement.

The crucial paragraph from *De Civitate Dei* however, which the Early Humanists read as a justification of their studies, runs as follows:

This Erythraean (or, as some are persuaded, Cumaean) Sibyl's entire poem, of which I have cited but a tiny segment, contains nothing at all in favour of worshiping false or man-made gods. Quite to the contrary, it speaks out so openly against them and their votaries that the prophetess herself, it seems, must be counted among those who belonged to the City of God.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Author's emphasis. Saint Augustine, *City of God*, trans. by Gerald G. Walsh, Demetrius B. Zema, Grace Monahan and Daniel J. Honan (New York: Doubleday, 1950 repr. New York: Image Books, 1958), p.42.

This implies that the Virtuous Pagan may be inspired by God and might therefore find a place in Salvation, in the City of God. This opens the way for a study of the works of the Classical past of Italy and Greece, and for the view that Virgil was also part of the company of the redeemed since he wrote the Messianic *Eclogue*, foretelling the birth of Christ. Whenever St Augustine speaks of Virgil it is as an author with prevision of Christian truths. He is only ever quoted to support or illustrate the Christian view with an implied monotheism and examples of the unreliability of the pagan gods. He is seen as having prevision of the central tenets of Christianity and, as such, wholly to be recommended for Christians to read, for example, in *City of God*, I. iii :

Take Virgil. Children must read this greatest and best of all poets in order to impress their tender minds so deeply that he may never be easily forgotten, much as the well-known words of Horace suggest:

The liquors that new vessel first contains

*Behind them leave a taste that long remains.*¹¹⁵

Virgil is, by right of his Divine inspiration, by implication part of the City of God.

SIBYLS IN THE EARLY ENCYCLOPAEDIAS

Following Basil's and Augustine's view that the Sibyls were the heralds of Christ's coming and of Salvation, the early compilers of Encyclopaedias included them as entries, often aligning them to the Prophets.

The Legend of the Emperor Augustus and the Sibyl

As recorded by the early encyclopaedists and chroniclers

In Rome on the Capitol, is the Church of the Ara Coeli, or 'Altar of Heaven'. The name of the Church, and a twelfth-century mosaic preserved within it, record its legendary foundation story: the encounter between Augustus and the Sibyl.

¹¹⁵ *City of God*, p.400.

This church was built on the site that in Roman times was the temple of Juno Moneta, an early Roman mint, and the source of our words, 'monetary' and 'money'. The Imperial Palace stood on the site next to it, flanked by the Temple of Jupiter. This area was the site of one of the fabled encounter between Augustus and the Tiburtine Sibyl. The present church is substantially thirteenth-century but the original Byzantine monastic church was one of the earliest Christian churches.

The version of the story narrated below is that of the twelfth-century *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, commonly known simply as the *Mirabilia*. However, written records of the folk story can be traced in much earlier texts. The Byzantine scholar, John Malalas, records the legend in his *Chronographia*, written in the second half of the sixth century. He in turn cites Timoteus, a Byzantine chronicler who lived between the second half of the fifth century and the first ten years of the sixth. The earliest church on this site was in the care of a community of Byzantine monks before it passed to the Benedictines. The early Byzantine presence shows how the Greek sources for the story could be known in Rome, be celebrated in the church and find their way into the *Mirabilia*.

This mosaic in the Aracoeli is one of the earliest appearances of a single Sibyl in architecture. It dates from the time of the anti-pope, Anacletus II (1130-37). The only earlier representation I know of is a painted Sibyl at Sant'Angelo in Formis (1072-78). The former mosaic records the Tiburtine or 'Albunean' Sibyl's prophecy to Augustus of the coming of Christ. According to legend, Augustus raised an altar, the *Ara Coeli*, or *Ara Filii Dei* here, where he received a vision of the Virgin and the Christ Child, having been guided by the Sibyl. As Georgina Masson points out, the Sibylla Tiburtina's prophecy was probably the most influential in qualifying the Sibyls to be seen as Western prophets of Christ.¹¹⁶

The *Mirabilia* tells the following story, a miracle to readers in Mediaeval Rome but viewed with a certain distancing irony by the modern reader. Augustus summoned the

¹¹⁶ See Georgina Masson's scholarly *Companion Guide to Rome* (London: Collins, 1965), pp. 35-37.

Tiburtine Sibyl to consult her. He announced that he was worried. To his consternation the senate wished to honour him as a God. One might think that this was a consternation devoutly to be wished and easily dispensed with, by a refusal. However, Augustus was not naturally self-effacing, neither was he a man renowned for self-parody. Nevertheless, even Augustus may have had marginal but nagging doubts about sacrilege and *hubris*: a combination known to be fatal to absolute rulers, the pages of his literature being full of the most unfortunate examples. It would no doubt be Bad Luck to annoy the Heavenly Powers at this stage. He therefore summoned Sibylla Tiburtina in order to know where exactly the Heavenly Powers stood on the matter. The *Mirabilia* records that they were swift, but not exactly encouraging in answer. The Sibyl prophesied that,

*There are signs that justice will be done, soon the earth will be bathed in sweat
and from the sun will descend the King of future centuries.*¹¹⁷

(Modern readers recognise this as derived from St Augustine's Sibylline Acrostic.)

Whilst she spoke, the Emperor had a vision: the Heavens opened and a Virgin appeared, standing on an altar, bathed in light, holding a Child in her arms. Two voices called out from Heaven saying,

*This is the Virgin who will receive in her womb the Saviour of the World – this
is the altar of the Son of God.*¹¹⁸

Augustus subsequently swiftly refused deification and raised an altar to, the *First-born Son of God* on the spot where he received the vision.

Apart from the fact that it is a very good story, Masson opines that the legend may owe its preservation and repetition to its support of an extremely early concept. This was that the Roman Empire arose in order to aid the spread of Christianity, and fell because instead it

¹¹⁷ See *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, cited in Emanuele Romanelli, *Santa Maria in Aracoel*, p. 2, and in Masson, p. 35 (her translation).

¹¹⁸ Masson's translation, p. 35.

had protected idolatry. This idea became the orthodox Christian argument. St Augustine propounded the view in *De Civitate Dei* in order to counter the pagan argument that the barbarian invasions were so devastating because Rome had forsaken its ancestral gods when Constantine made Christianity the official Roman religion in 313.

The reason for the early appearance in art of a named Sibyl on this site is that it is an *aition*, or explanation of origins, of the *cause* of a particular site being regarded as special or Holy. It is the artistic equivalent of what we find in literature for example in the *Aetia* of Callimachus, or the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid. There may have been a continuous place memory if not a mosaic, from very early times.

Other Encyclopaedists

Isidore of Seville (c.560 – 598) was the last of the Western Church's Fathers and Bishop of Seville. His *Etymologies* was an encyclopaedia of human and divine subjects. It was one of the most widely studied and important reference books of the Dark and Middle Ages. It compiled in twenty sections Classical wisdom extracted from words of previous encyclopaedists, and various writers. It treats the seven liberal arts by relating them to wider knowledge: cosmology, anthropology, history, agriculture and architecture. Isidore identifies the ten Varronian Sibyls.

Chronicon Pascale (Seventh Century) is an anonymous Chronicle belonging to a genre of Byzantine world histories that often begin with Creation and narrate events till the present. The theology is often naïve and the depiction of character two-dimensional. They did, however, help the ordinary Byzantine, for whom they were written, to see his life and times as having significance as part of the continuing dramatic history of the world and of Salvation. The *Chronicon Pascale*, unlike Isidore's *Etymologies*, names twelve Sibyls, the same number as that of the Prophets.

The Suda (Tenth Century) was a large encyclopaedia cum dictionary. It was once thought to be the work of one 'Suidas' but it is now known that its title derives from the word, *Suda*, the Byzantine Greek word for fortress. It too, identifies twelve Sibyls.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ See Angelina Rossi, 'Le Sibille nelle Arti Figurative Italiane', in *L'Arte*, Anno XVIII Fasc. IV, 1st August, 1915, p. 219.

THE SIBYLS IN THE DARK AGES

THE PROBLEM OF DISCONTINUITY IN THE SIBYLLINE TRADITION

I am unsatisfied by the notion, evidently generally accepted, that Sibyls disappeared from Southern European culture in the so-called Dark Ages, the Barbarian invasions during and after the life-time of Basil, Jerome and Augustine, and that their brief reappearance in the *trecento* with the work of Giovanni Pisano is simply the result of the private whim of intellectuals as is their reappearance in number in the fifteenth century.

Sibyl frescos were painted in peasant parish churches where pictorial art is expected to communicate meaning to the unlettered. It is as though the population in general could be assumed to have an understanding of the meaning and cultural significance of these arcane personages without need of explanation. From where though, did the popular understanding of Sibyls, who they were and what they signified, come, if they had so completely disappeared from Italic culture?

I can show that there was a popular oral and liturgical Sibylline tradition, common to the lives of courtier and peasant alike, one that has now completely disappeared from mainland Italy. It is necessary to look for sources not previously examined; the evidence is not in the History of Art but that of Music and Liturgy.

What once was a popular form of public devotion in Italy is still to be found in Catholic culture elsewhere. I am now able to refer to documentary and physical evidence of a once popular, now largely forgotten, deeply dramatic and thrilling Liturgy of the Sibyl, celebrated in parish churches all through the early Christian era and the Dark Ages and into Mediaeval times. Its origin is likely to have been in early Roman Christian times, possibly the fifth century, just after the fall of Rome to Alaric: the Sibylline Acrostic of St Augustine.

THE *ORDO SIBYLLARUM*: THE RITE OF THE SIBYL

The earliest manuscripts still extant date from the tenth and early eleventh centuries. In the late 900s there was increasing dread at the coming of the millennium, a 'new age' that might, it was thought, mean the end of time. The general population had a strongly established *emotional* recognition and understanding: a sense of impending, hopeless and dramatic doom urgently to be averted. This sense of doom associated with the Sibyls reflects both their earliest oracles and the Apocalyptic mood of the tenth century.

This sense of impending doom is thrillingly expressed in the music and words of the ritual. It accords with the mediaeval 'doom' frescos of the Last Judgement. The ritual was performed in the darkness of the two most important nights of the Christian year: Christmas Eve, the night before the coming of the Saviour, whose life was to instruct all Christians, and Good Friday, the night of his saving death. The imminent doom foretold by the Sibyls, with such drama in the dark and incense smoke-laden air, was seen and heard in the knowledge that the hearers were already saved. The horror and terror were perhaps akin to the modern audience's pleasurable response to a horror movie.

Like Church drama in England, the rite was celebrated both in the streets and in the Church building. During daylight hours a boy soprano, dressed often in a long blonde wig and female garments, indicating that he represented the Sibyl, was led in procession on a white horse through the streets of the parish. In Toledo, he was accompanied by four altar boys, two carrying candelabra and two swords. These they would clash together during the performance as the introduction to the Sibyl's utterance in the Service. When darkness fell the full rite was celebrated, in which the chosen chorister sang the words of the Sibyl.

The Origins of the Rite

The core of the rite, the Sibyl's oracle, is the Greek acrostic quoted in Latin translation by St Augustine. Its origin is Book VIII of the surviving Sibylline Books. St Augustine's poem, begins with the awesome words, '*Judici signum*', (the sign of judgement) and proclaims that the whole earth will break out into sweat as a prelude to the Last Day, the Day

of Judgement. It continues with a list of the terrible events to come. The whole text is given in Appendix 7: The acrostic of St Augustine is the central core of the Rite of the Sibyl. The rite has, though, an additional and less worthy source.

Quodvultus: Bishop of Carthage from 437-453

Quodvultus, who was made Bishop seven years after Augustine's death, wrote an unsavoury sermon *Against Jews, Pagans and Arians* subtitled *Sermo de Symbolo* which in the Middle Ages was taken to be by St Augustine and incorporated into the Rite of the Sibyl.¹²⁰ The sermon is divided into twenty-two chapters, the section against Jews, chapters XI – XVIII, begins, '*Vos inquam convenio, O Judei!*'¹²¹ There follow selections from the Hebrew Prophets foretelling the coming and significance of Christ. There follow four Jewish persons written of in the New Testament and then the gentiles, Nebuchadnezzar and Virgil. The last prophecy in the whole sermon is that of the Erythraean Sibyl whose words are exactly those of the Latin translation used by St Augustine. In this repellent sermon, we see the seeds of the mediaeval anti-Semitism that was such a devastating blot on the face of the Church. This sermon was commonly read in its entirety on Christmas Matins, frequently read in anticipation on the night of Christmas Eve. In some places it was also performed on Good Friday. The song is preceded by a preamble:

**Quid Sibylla vaticinando etiam de Christo clamaverit in medium
proferamus, ut ex uno ispide utrorumque frontes percutiantur, judaeorum**

¹²⁰ Cited by Maricarmen Gomez in her textual introduction to *El Cant de la Sibilla*. English translation by Jacqueline Minett, p 9-13 (Rouen: Audivis-Astée, 1988) Reference no E8705.

¹²¹ I'm speaking to you, O Jews.

**sollipet atque paganorum, atque suo gladio, sicut Goliath, Christi omnes
percutiantur inimici audite quid dixerit.**¹²²

The Sibyl's words, as a climax to the sermon, are sung by the boy soprano or, in convents, by a nun with a particularly strong and attractive voice. The earliest manuscript with musical annotation is from the monastery of St Oyan, and is ninth or tenth century.¹²³ However, the musical annotation seems to have been added by a later hand. It is not certain when music first became part of the reading of the sermon, or when dramatic elements were added. It was certainly in Italy, as part of the Papal Liturgy for Christmas by 1143, since the *Ordo Romanus*, composed before that date, says:

**In vigilia Natalis Domini ad Matutinum ... Quarta lectio sermo sancti
Augustini: Vos inquam convenio, O judei. In Quarta cantantur sibylline
versus: Iudicii signum.**¹²⁴

This means that the *Sermo de Symbolo* was certainly established in Italy by the first half of the twelfth century, although it may have been present very much earlier, and may have had a continuous usage since the time of Augustine.

The Suppression of the Rite: The Council of Trent, 1568

The Council of Trent was called to make internal reforms to the worship and governance of the Roman Catholic Church in response to the surge of Protestant

¹²² Let us proclaim what the Sibyl prophesied about Christ, that the foreheads of Jews and pagans alike be suddenly pierced with a stone and all the enemies of Christ with a sword like Goliath. Hear what she said!

¹²³ St Oyan, *El Canto de la Sibilla II*, Lat. 2832) Cited by Maricarmen Gomezin her textual introduction to *El Cant de la Sibilla*, CD recording (Rouen: Auvidis-Astée, 1988) Reference no. E8705. English translation by Jacqueline Minett, pp 9-13.

¹²⁴ In the Christmas Day Matins ... At the fourth sermon, beginning: *Vos inquam convenio, O judei* (*It's you I'm talking to, Jews!*) In that fourth sermon, the verses of the *Judici Signum* are sung.

reformation. As part of this, it responded to accusations of Roman paganism infecting the purity of worship, by purging the liturgy of many unbiblical rites. These might often be the most popular local or national expressions of folk religion, Christianised. The Rite of the Sibyl was a clear example of a religious observance which smacked of the pagan past and as such it was wholly excluded from the new Tridentine Breviary made the exclusive source of Liturgy, an enactment made compulsory for the whole Western Church. However, in remote dioceses in Corsica and in many parts of Spain, and very likely in other locations, no notice was taken and the popular Rite continued. The tradition was strong in Majorca in the seventeenth century. Bartolome Valperga gives an account of a miracle of St Catalina Thomas (1533-74) in which a lump of sugar was miraculously given to her to ease the throat of the young nun who was sing the part of the Sibyl in the Rite at Christmas.¹²⁵ In Italy, however, it is likely that the Papal edict held much greater control over parish priests and their laity. However, it is true to say that Sibyls continued to be presented in frescos in their role as prophets of Christ, seemingly continuing to be understood by and familiar to the laity, so it is possible that the tradition continued but ceased to be an important feature the liturgical year in Italy.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Bartolome Valperga wrote the life of this Saint in 1617. See Maricarmen Gomez, p. 12.

¹²⁶ See Appendix 7.

THE MIDDLE AGES

THE DIES IRAE

The collocation in pre-Tridentine Catholicism of the Sibyl with Prophets gave almost equal status to the Sibyl as that accorded to the twelve Minor and twelve Major Prophets of the Old Testament. This is reflected in the poem, often said to be by the Franciscan poet, the biographer and friend of St Francis, Tomaso di Celano, the *Dies Irae*, which became part of the Catholic liturgy for All Souls and for Requiem and commemorative Masses.¹²⁷ The poem is an imaginative evocation of the Day of Judgement, and the poet's mind seems naturally to reach for 'the Sibyl' in connection with that subject, probably because of his experience of the Rite of the Sibyl celebrated at Christmas and Easter.

Dies Irae! Dies illa!

Oh Day of Wrath, that day

Solvat Saeclum in favilla,

When the earth will crumble in ashes

Teste David cum Sibylla.

As David and the Sibyl testify.

Whoever wrote it, this poem is probably influenced by a tenth-century judgement hymn, coming from the period of millennial dread, discussed in relation to the *Ordo Sibyllarum*.¹²⁸

Date: Father Eusebius Clop, O.F.M., gives a date as early as 1253-55 for a Franciscan missal in which it is found.¹²⁹ Its calendar does not contain the name of St Clare, who was canonized in 1255. A Franciscan Missal would certainly contain the name of St Francis's

¹²⁷ Other authors have been suggested by authorities: St Gregory the Great (d. 604), Thurstan, Archbishop of York (d. 1140), St Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153), Innocent III (d. 1216), St Bonaventure (d. 1274), Humbert, a general of the Dominicans, (d. 1277), Cardinal Latino Orsini, or Frangipani, a Dominican (d. 1296), Cardinal Matteo d'Aquasparta (1302), Felix Haemmerlein, a priest of Zurich (d. 1457), Agostino Biella, an Augustinian (d. 1491).

¹²⁸ See S. Trench, *Sacred Latin Poetry*, 3rd edn. (London: [n.p.], 1874) *fn* p. 302.

¹²⁹ in the *Revue du chant Gregorien* (November – December, 1907), p. 49.

cousin, were she to have been canonised at the time it was written. He also identifies another missal as that of St Clare, and sees that the poem is inserted into the end of it. He dates that as early as 1228.

It will be noted that the poet refers to only one, un-named Sibyl. This seems to be common in early mediaeval Art Literature and Liturgy. She is the prophet of Doom come to utter the '*Judice Signum*' poem of St Augustine in the *Ordo Sibillarum*.

ITALIAN CHURCH DRAMA

The subject of early Italian ecclesiastical drama is a vast and complex one. There is no space here to enter into its history and development. Suffice it to say that by the fifteenth century the collocation of the twelve minor and twelve major prophets with twelve Sibyls, all prophesying the coming of Christ, was a frequent prelude to the main action in plays about the Annunciation or the Nativity. Since there were only ten Varronian Sibyls, two more had to be invented. These were commonly the Sibylla Agrippa or Aegypta and the Sibylla Europa. With the advent of twelve named Sibyls, derived from Varro and the imagination of an early Humanist, not only were there Sibyls with individual names and implied places of origin, but the essential tenor of their message changed. No longer was the Sibyl the prophet of Doom. Rather, the twelve Sibyls became the prophets of Salvation. They were the heralds of the coming of Christ. Some sayings were taken from Lactantius. There is however, a consistent body of sayings attributed to individual Sibyls. It appears in frescos all over Central and Northern Italy. It is also found in Church drama. Its origins are wholly obscure, and this dissertation will attempt to make some progress in tracing its source. We shall have occasion to examine the Revello manuscript of the Nativity Play from that town in great detail, since it contains a written list of the sayings of the twelve Sibyls as they appear on the

frescos all over Italy.¹³⁰ A full exposition of that, and its possible source, will be given in subsequent chapters.

The frescos on the Church walls were likely to be related to the dramatic productions mounted in the Churches, some of them perhaps recording the costumes worn and the persons participating.

¹³⁰ Reproduced in full in A. Cornagliotti, *La Passione di Revello: Sacra rappresentazione quattrocento* (Torino: Centro Studi Piemontesi, 1976), pp 5-6.

SIBYLS IN ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Although Christian writers first made mention of the Sibyls in the second century AD, they do not appear in surviving works of art till the eleventh century.¹³¹ The early works commonly show one Sibyl, often without a personal name or location. Single Sibyls are found in three places near Naples: at Sant'Angelo in Formia (1072-78); Sessa Aurunca, where there is a carved Sibyl on the pulpit (1224-59) and at Ravello where there is also one carved Sibyl on the pulpit which dates from roughly the same period.

Sometimes, during the very early period, there might be two Sibyls, again unnamed, but usually no more. The only exception known to me is in an illustration to a manuscript of the *De Universo*, c.1023 by Rabanus Maurus.¹³² In this manuscript, in a miniature, Lactantius's array of ten Sibyls appears, in two groups of five. They are without particular attributes except that the leader of each group is writing in a book. There is, otherwise, no differentiation between the images, which are generalised, not individual. As far as can be judged, this tiny miniature exerted no influence on later iconography of Sibyls.

Academic authorities generally simply record the fact that as far as is known, after the Classical period, Sibyls do not recur as an artistic or architectural motif till the late thirteenth century in Northern Italy, when Giovanni Pisano suddenly began to carve them. Thereafter, as Cust says, "from that time, until the middle of the fifteenth century, we find no other groups of them."¹³³

¹³¹ See R. H. Hobart Cust *The Pavement Masters of Siena* (London: George Bell, 1901), p.32.

¹³² The manuscript is at Montecassino, Abbey Library, cod. 132 [circa 1023], p. 337. The codex, copied and illustrated at Montecassino, is probably a copy of a Carolingian original. C.f. M. Reuter, *Text und Bild im codex 132 der Bibliothek von Montecassino, 'Liber Rabani de originibus rerum'*, München 1984. See also Di Francesca, f.n. 2, p.39.

¹³³ See Cust, p.33.

Nicolò Pisano (active c. 1258-78) and his son, Giovanni Pisano (active 1265-1314)

Nicolò and Giovanni together carved the first series of monumental statues incorporated into architecture in Tuscany: the series of saints and prophets for the outside of the Baptistery in Pisa. Giovanni then moved on to Siena in 1284 and carved a series of prophets and at least two Sibyls for the exterior of the Cathedral. In 1301 he carved what Cust (p. 33) refers to as, 'the most poetic Choir' of Sibyls on the pulpit at S. Andrea in Pistoia. He then returned to Pisa Cathedral (1302-10) and carved the larger pulpit there with eight or ten Sibyls. Of those that remain, however, a few have recognisable and particular attributes and one has an inscribed scroll.

It is difficult to account for the Giovanni Pisano's engagement with the subject of Sibyls. No work has been done on the corpus of work that must have existed in Southern Italy before Nicolò moved to Pisa. He arrived as an accomplished artist. He was born in Apulia and could not then have been known as 'Pisano', 'the Pisan'. Since he trained and grew to maturity in the south, he would be part of the brilliant culture of the Emperor Frederick II, (1212-1250) the Norman, Hohenstaufen, King of the Two Sicilies. After he died and attacks from the Angevins followed, Nicolò moved to Pisa. That eclectic and brilliant King had fostered a culture often described as the 'Proto-Renaissance'. No research has been done as yet to find Nicolò's work in the south, but I believe that it is there that an answer will be found to the question of the Pisanis' interest in the Sibyls. It could of course also stem from the imaginative stimulus gained from the *Ordo Sibyllarum*.

Giotto (c. 1267-1337)

After working as Court Painter to Robert of Anjou, King of Naples, for four years, he returned to Florence and he painted Sibyls. What we see then is that the *only* significant

appearances of Sibyls in early fourteenth-century art were by artists who had been strongly influenced by the culture of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.¹³⁴

Anonymous Fresco Master at Cortina d'Ampezzo

There is one later picture at Cortina di Ampezzo (1400), near the German border.¹³⁵ It is a fresco of five crowned Sibyls carrying scrolls. This is not a full cycle and the text bears no relationship to anything else that I have seen in Italy, or in Classical texts or manuscripts. I think it likely that it has more to do with German or Italian Mediaeval folk tale or *Mirabilia* than a Humanist involvement with the Classical Sibyls. The picture is very interesting, however, since the Sibyls have both scrolls and attributes.

After Cortina di Ampezzo, no further painted Sibyls are found, as far as I am aware, until the Sibyl Cycle made for Cardinal Giordano Orsini in his palace in Rome. This started the genre of Sibyl Cycles that is the subject of this study, and the matter of the following chapters.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ There may have been Sibyl frescos or sculptures in its Palaces, now destroyed.

¹³⁵ See F. M. Cornford, "Sybil Fresco at Cortina d'Ampezzo", *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, x, f.n., iv (1898-1903), pp. 369-73, and Salvatore Settis, "Le Sibille di Cortina", in *Renaissance Studies in Honour of Craig Hugh Smyth*, vol. II, (Firenze: Giunti Barbèra, 1985).

¹³⁶ During the research for this Doctorate, I believe I have found and identified a Sibyl and another sculpture, probably of Our Lady, by Giovanni Pisano, previously unknown to scholarship in a tiny parish in the mountains of Northern Italy. Because this is still in the process of validation, I have written the evidence in [REDACTED]

PART II: TRANSMISSION OF TEXT AND IMAGE IN THE EARLY RENAISSANCE

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CHAPTER I: TRANSMISSION OF TEXT

In the course of this chapter, reference will be made to the essential manuscript sources and the so called ‘canonical text’, the common text of the painted Sibyl Cycles throughout Northern and Central Italy. The reader will find *facsimiles* and transcriptions of the essential documents and a Table of Oracles demonstrating the distribution of Sibylline oracles in each particular site in the Appendices for Chapter II. It was previously unknown that the painted cycles, from west of Genoa to the east of Venice and as far south as Rome, share a consistent allocation of Latin prophetic text, placed next to each named Sibyl. The source of that text is, however, unknown. It is clearly important to discover its origin. The identification and description of all known sites, the making of a complete photographic record and the identification and analysis of text and iconographic motifs are the main aims of this dissertation.

The Cultural Significance of the Sibyl Cycle

The rhetorical purpose of the Early Renaissance Sibyl cycles was to link contemporary Rome, as the centre of the Christian civilization, with its illustrious Classical past. This would legitimise the study of that past and thus justify the Renaissance itself. As we have seen, some early Fathers like Jerome had advocated a complete disjunction from all things pagan. The cycles provided a visual argument against St Jerome’s view that the culture of the pagan world was unredeemed and should be eschewed by the devout Christian. Rome had been the centre of the pagan known world and it must have seemed natural to the Italic peoples that it should continue to be the centre and hub of the Christian world. The Eastern Orthodox Church took a different view. It saw Jerusalem, and the Holy Land, where Jerome eventually lived, as the legitimate centre and source of the Christian world, having the cultural inheritance of the Prophets and the historic presence of Christ. Rome however, was the repository of the Pauline and Petrine texts. If it could also claim its own Italic prophets, then a shift of emphasis was possible and justifiable. The presence of non-Jewish prophets of

Christ, both Greek and Latin, strengthened Rome's independence from Jerusalem and the east and certainly legitimised the reading of Classical texts. Logically, it was no more illicit to read literature from the pre-Christian Italic past if it contained prophecy of the new Christian age to come, than it was to read pre-Christian Jewish texts, Poetry, History and Philosophy, that is, the Old Testament. Thus, Sibyls could legitimise pride in the pagan past resolving a damaging discontinuity in the national and cultural identity.

Looking with hindsight, one can forget that the amazing cultural development, later called the Renaissance, might easily have been suppressed or deflated. The early Sibyl cycles belong to the period where the matter was still at issue. I do not want to make protracted attempts to define the term, 'Early Renaissance', except to say that it is not, in my view, a question of objective dates, but of widely recognised artistic style and iconographic content. A convenient *terminus ad quem* for this study might either be the last year of the quattrocento, or 1505, the date of Aringhieri's last contribution to the floor of Siena Cathedral. However, paradoxically, I prefer to remain a little numerically vague in the interests of accuracy, and insist that the difference between an Early Renaissance artefact and a High Renaissance work, whilst clearly recognisable, is not defined by conveniently specific dates. A new development in a movement co-exists with the production of outstanding examples of the art of the preceding era and the process of cultural change took place at different rates in different principalities.

This study is not primarily concerned with the art of the High Renaissance, even though Raphael's Roman Sibyl cycles are included for the sake of logical completion of the account of the inception of the form. The Sibyls of the Sistine chapel for example, painted in 1512, are a sublimely executed work of art and a significant component of the architectonics of the whole plan. However, they have lost their intellectual energy and connection with the debate about the status of pagan texts in a Christian culture. They are dumb: the Sibyls' books are closed except one on which only a shadowy impression of writing can be described; there are no words on their scrolls. Neither is there any need. In 1512, the fight to legitimise the study of the (pagan) Classics is over and won. Sibyls are no longer a cultural

intervention, but a widely understood convention, almost an iconographic cliché. Their mere presence in a public building is sufficient to convey suitable intellectual *gravitas* and the now widely accepted idea that the wisdom of true doctrine is inherent in ancient Italic and Greek, as well as Hebrew culture. In terms of the energy of debate however, in High Renaissance art, Sibyls are a spent force.

In the Early Renaissance, to paint or carve a Sibyl cycle in a church or palace was a nailing of colours to the mast. Late in 1481, Barbieri's *Discordantia Nonnullae*, a pamphlet illustrated with the Sibyls, expressed the conflict between Saints Jerome and Augustine, as to the status of Classical learning and literature and the fate of the good pagan. The painting of a Sibyl Cycle asserted the optimistic doctrine of the inclusion of the good and enlightened pre-Christian pagan in the Kingdom of God. In the Early Renaissance, this was an energetic and creative intervention, rather than a mere convention. It met with powerful, rigorous and principled opposition. Dante, whilst deeply and movingly fond and respectful of Virgil, excludes him from Paradise.

The Development of the Genre

The genre is generally believed to have started with the Orsini Cycle in Rome painted between 1431 and 1434. I have not been able to find a pre-existing cycle of ten or twelve Sibyls anywhere.¹³⁷ The status and power of Cardinal Giordano Orsini, who commissioned it, and the fact that the trope was copied by aspiring Orsini protégés, help to explain its original dissemination across Italy. The Orsini had patronage and patrimony east of Venice and west of Genoa. Importantly they had lands in Genoa and further to the west near to the mountains of Piedmont. There was, in Piedmont, in the fourteenth and fifteenth century a continuing strong tradition of Church drama, which featured the Sibyls of Lactantius as heralds of Christ's birth. One can imagine the young and impressionable Giordano Orsini

¹³⁷ There is the possible exception of the heterodox group (only four Sibyls extant and no sure evidence that it was ever a full cycle) at Cortina di Ampezzo c. 1400.

being deeply affected by the sights, sounds and smells of that drama, and also by the pleasurably terrifying *Ordo Sibillarum*, the Rite of the Sibyl, at Christmas and Easter. What is not imaginary is the fact that Orsini lands were held in the region which at that period was richly provided with such drama and that the link between drama and the pictorial tradition was there established and continued throughout the development of this genre, greatly to the enrichment of both artistic modes.

The Development of Visual Conventions

This link between theatrical costumes and the representation of the Sibyl in art becomes crucial especially after the invention of printing, and the production of engravings and woodcuts to illustrate text. Cheap, identical copies meant that an image could be very widely transmitted. There was no more a necessary reliance on the broad verbal descriptions recording the appearance of the Sibyls that we find in written manuscripts before the advent of the printed image. The fact that these manuscripts predate the painted cycles gives some indication that a visual tradition of representing the appearance of Sibyls was likely to be related to costume in the Sacred Dramas. There is a certain naiveté about the laity's attitude to visual images before printing. It rests on an unspoken, perhaps unconscious, assumption, that what one has seen with one's own eyes must be true. Therefore once the Sibilla Tiburtina, for example, has been seen in the drama in a red dress, with a hairy animal skin round her neck, loose locks and a book in her hand, that becomes her garb in any subsequent production, because that is how the audience remember her, and very likely, because in the practical business of theatre, costumes are re-used and lent to other productions. Thus a convention is born from both custom and convenience. In the Revello Manuscript we read:

**Et primo sibilla Tiburtina, annorum 20, veste rubea inducta, desuper ad
collum pellem hyrcinam per inducta scapulas habens, capillis discopertis,
brevem in manu tenens.**

*And first, Sibilla Tiburtina, 20 years old, wearing a red gown, having above it at her neck a hairy pelt covering her shoulders, hair uncovered, holding a book in her hand.*¹³⁸

However, whilst the frescos very much adhered to the manuscripts in the matter of canonical oracles, the visual appearance was left much more to the individual artists, who sometimes followed the descriptions in the manuscripts, as for example in Baccio Baldini's engravings, or chose to ignore them as in the early Orsini frescos.¹³⁹ If we compare the descriptions of the appearance of the individual Sibyls in five manuscripts it will be found that there is wide divergence. There is no canonical appearance for individual Sibyls, whilst in terms of their oracles, i.e. the text and its attribution to particular Sibyls, there is almost no divergence whatever. Text is the unifying element in this Italic genre.

The Significance of Manuscripts

It is almost impossible to date many of the manuscripts relating to the Sibyl Cycles.¹⁴⁰ The crucial question is whether they antedate the frescos or post-date them. At first, they all appear to be descriptions of paintings because of the detailed descriptions of the Sibyls' appearance. However, the Edinburgh manuscript can be no later than 1406, the date of the death of Coluccio Salutati, to whom it is dedicated as a living man.¹⁴¹ The earliest estimation

¹³⁸ Laurentian Library, MS. 1190 (olim 1264) Ashburnham. The Revello text is reproduced in Cornagliotti, pp. 5-6.

¹³⁹ See Appendix 9: Table to Show Allocation of Attributes in Cycles Influenced by the Baldini Iconography for a comparison of the physical description of individual Sibyls as found in five different locations.

¹⁴⁰ Lists of relevant manuscripts will be found in the bibliography under the place names of each of the sites.

¹⁴¹ Edinburgh University Library, MS. 120 [previously Laing III 141 misc. XV sec., see 35r-37r.] On this manuscript see C. R. Borland, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Medieval Manuscripts in*

of date for the first painted fresco, that in Cardinal Giordano Orsini's palace in Rome, is c. 1431. This is identified as the first series by a contemporary source, Poggio Bracciolini, who was of sufficient eminence and scholarly accomplishment to be an accurate observer.¹⁴² Therefore some of the manuscripts, with their descriptions of the appearance of the Sibyls, antedate the paintings. They also antedate the techniques for printing pictures. It is likely, therefore, that what is described in such detail are the physical characteristics of the Sibyls as they appeared in ecclesiastical Dramas.

Regional sub-genres

Although there is plainly no canonical rubric as to the appearance of individual Sibyls, it is nevertheless possible, once one has examined every known Sibyl site in Italy, to see that there are sub-genres of the form, which are plainly identifiable and which have particular geographical locations, or else a uniformity of patronage, as in 'Orsini Sibyl Cycles'. These clear sub-genres have never before been identified. The identifying features do not concern the minutiae of personal appearance, colour of garments and other painterly details, but rather, where in the building the frescos are located (for example on the whole expanse of wall in private dwellings as opposed to pictures within the confines of the underside of church arches) and the conventions of how the figures are placed in a background and whether they are full figures or head and shoulder renderings.

The Orsini Cycles

It does appear that the inception of the pictorial tradition of painted frescos began in Orsini lands, starting with the fresco in a private room, the *Camera dei paramenti*, in the Palace of Montegiordano, Rome, painted in the early 1430s. Other elite families began to

Edinburgh University Library (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1916), pp. 191-193. The *facsimile* is contained in Appendix 3.

¹⁴² Bracciolini, Poggio, *Lettere. III. Epistolarum Familiarium libri secundum volumen*, ed. H. Harth (Firenze: L. S. Olschi, 1984-1987), p.280.

imitate the genre as a cultural statement and an indication of their intellectual and social status. This was certainly true of the d'Estes of Ferrara, who may well have seen the frescos of Bishop Antonio Altan, also in North Eastern Italy but some distance further East. Bishop Altan was an Orsini protégé who emulated the Roman palace frescos in his own palace at San Vito al Tagliamento, in Northern Italy, to the east of Venice, in the early 1440s. (The latest date for the innovatory cycle of his patron, Cardinal Giordano Orsini at his palace of Montegiordano in Rome, is 1435.) By 1447, Lionello d'Este had his own Cycle in the anteroom to his study in the country residence outside Ferrara, called 'Bel Riguardo'. Unfortunately, this room no longer exists, but it is likely that the Duke's room exerted a profound influence on the *Room of the Sibyls* in the Casa Romei, a bourgeois house in Ferrara. This was the next building to contain such a room, which was executed in 1450 at the instruction of Giovanni Romei, a rising banker, about to marry an illegitimate daughter of the d'Este line. The extant D'Este fresco very much mirrors those of the earlier Orsini frescos, in that it is located in a private dwelling, takes the whole of the wall space above a dado with full figures painted against verdure.

The locally published literature that I have been able to find on each of the individual sites almost invariably attributes its own Cycle to the direct influence of Cardinal Giordano Orsini's palace in Rome. It is likely that the genre as a whole does stem from the initial inventive conceit of Cardinal Giordano's Roman palace, i.e. the original idea of having a wall painting of the Sibyls and their prophecies. Having identified what constitutes the 'Orsini style' however, I am now in a position to say confidently that some cycles have no direct iconographic or visual influence from Rome whatever. It is after all, much more likely that neighbouring rivalries and emulations ensured that once the genre had arrived in a region, a local example influenced neighbouring patrons. The pattern of influence is more like a network than a linear, wheel pattern whose spokes radiate from a hub in Rome

The belief that all Sibyl Cycles took their origin directly from Rome arises, I believe, from a failure to realise the significant part that written, and later printed, text had in the transmission of schemata for Sibyl cycles.

The Influence of the Printed Image

After the mid-fifteenth century, the Sibyl Cycles are also significantly influenced by the new technology of printing, and particularly by two sets of published images of Sibyls. One is a set of engravings by Baldini published at about the same time as the text of a Mystery Play produced in Florence in 1471. The other is the set of woodcuts assumed to be by Barbieri, first published ten years later in 1481, illustrating his theological tract, *Discordantia Nonnullae*.¹⁴³ The Baldini illustrations have clearly influenced the Barbieri images, as can be seen for instance, by comparing the Barbieri first and second editions of the woodcuts of Sibilla 'Erithrea' with the Baldini engravings, 'Eritca'. The important relation between the ephemeral, comparatively cheap, printed image and the design of later permanent, significant and expensive works of art will be more fully explored later, when each of the known sites is described and illustrated.

Although the Siena floor with its remarkable series of ten prophetesses can be seen as the highest expression of the new genre, it departs significantly from the Roman cycle and the textual tradition of the frescos. Siena and Rimini, the only cycles worked in stone, depart from the otherwise consistent selection and attribution of texts to particular Sibyls. The text of the Sibylline oracles on these two sites is Classical, taken from Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*. The selection and attribution of that text is however not consistent between the sites.

¹⁴³ Barbieri, Filippo, *Discordantia nonnullae inter Sanctae Hieronymum et Augustinum* (Rome: 1481 second edition 1482) is illustrated with woodcuts. The section on Sibyls is printed in De Clercq, Carlo, 'Quelques series italiennes de Sibylles', in *Bulletin di l'Institut Historique Belge di Rome*, XLVIII-XLIX, 1978-79. For Baldini, see Arthur Mayger Hind: *Catalogue of Early Italian Engravings preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum* (London: Printed by order of the Trustees, 1909-10)

The Remarkable Uniformity of Text Throughout Italy: The Process of Discovery and Recording of Data

The Selection and Order of the Named Sibyls

The main and obvious organising factor in the Sibyl cycles is the choice of the names of the ten or twelve Sibyls. There are Sibyls, known to late antiquity, who do not appear on the frescos, as for example, Sambethe, the 'Jewish Sibyl'. Italian Sibyl cycles are composed of the ten Sibyls of Varro: Persian; Libyan; Delphian; Cimmerian; Erythraean; Samian; Cumaean; Hellespontine; Phrygian and Tiburtine.¹⁴⁴ This is the order in which Varro records them, presumably because he took that to be their chronological order. The original Orsini fresco in Rome followed the Varronian selection and sequence.

Many scholars comparing groups of cycles took the order in which the Sibyls were arranged to be significant, and assumed that any divergence marked some kind of falling off from the main body of the tradition. Having examined all of the ten surviving full cycles, I do not think that Humanist iconographers felt that the order in which they appeared round a room or on a wall was particularly significant, and felt quite free to vary it.¹⁴⁵ I do not think that early in the Renaissance, designers knew enough about the original Classical Sibyls to consider chronology, or to think order significant. Varro, as he has come down to us in Lactantius, does not explicitly state that his order is chronological.

Two extra, highly conjectural Sibyls, the Europa and the Agrippa, (sometimes called the Sibylla Aegypta) were invented and added to the Varronian list in the Renaissance. This was to make a list of twelve female Classical Prophets to match the twelve male Hebrew Prophets, making a rhetorical point about the equal validity of the Classical and Italic culture

¹⁴⁴The relevant passage from Varro is preserved in Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, I. 6. See also Parke, pp. 30-31

¹⁴⁵ By 'full cycle', I mean a cycle which has the Sibyls comprising the Varronian ten, or a cycle consisting of the Varronian ten with the addition of the Renaissance Europa and the Agrippa, or their pseudonymous variants.

with that of Hebrew literature. I have not yet discovered any evidence as to who invented these; they are not Classical.

Selection of text

Previous scholarship believed Barbieri to be the source text of the Sibylline oracles used on the frescos, particularly of the new pair, Europa and Agrippa, transmitting awareness of these throughout Italy. Much scholarly time is spent considering which edition is most reliable. Emile Mâle proposes that the codex in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris is to be considered the model for an *editio princeps*¹⁴⁶. Cornagliotti cites four Italian manuscripts of the same work, which she feels have equal weight.¹⁴⁷

I now know that Mâle is mistaken. Barbieri cannot be the original source of the canonical list, since the Sibyls and their canonical oracles appear in frescos painted long before his work and adult life. However, the manuscripts cited do give us an insight into the variants on the two extra Sibyls i.e. whether Agrippa or Egypta appears, and the seeming disregard for the order in which they appear.¹⁴⁸ It is true however, that Barbieri is very likely

¹⁴⁶ Emile Mâle, *Quomodo Sibyllas recentiores artices repraesentaverint*, Thesim Facultati Litteratum Parisiense proponebat (Paris: Leroux, 1899).

¹⁴⁷ Cornagliotti, Anna, *La Passione di Revello: sacra rappresentazione quattrocentesca: di ignoto piemontese*; (Torino: Centro studi piemontesi, 1976) p. xxxviii. This is scholarly work of rigour, depth and detail, to which I am much indebted.

¹⁴⁸ These manuscripts, which are lists of Sibyls, constituting the full cycle, may be compared: **MS. 201 Biblioteca Universitaria di Padova**, ff. 116v.-118r. (dated between 1463 and 1471): Persea, Lybica, Delphica, Cimeria, Erithea, Samia, Cumana, Elespontica, Frigia, Tiburtina, Egiptia and Europia. **MS. 540 Biblioteca Universitaria di Padova**, Sec. XV, cc. 23v. – 25r.: Agrippa, Libica, Delphica, Frigia, Samia, Europa, Persica, [Tiburtina], Erithea, Helespontina, Cumana, Chimica (a pseudonym for Cumaea) **MS. A12 Biblioteca Forteguerriana di Pistoia** Sec XV, ff. 64r. – 65v.: Persia, Libica, Delphica, Cumexia, Eritea, Sama, Cumana, Elesponsea, Frigia, Tiburtina, Europa,

to be the inspiration for the iconography of the floor of Siena Cathedral, since his work was published in Florence in 1481, the year before the floor was laid down. Aringhieri, Rector of the Cathedral, made ambassadorial trips to Florence, and the floor echoes the unusual collocation of the Sibyls with Hermes Trismegistus and the Egyptian books of Wisdom, that is found in Barbieri's *Discordantia*.

Whilst the selection of the particular named Sibyls is clearly the most important formative element in the composition of the frescos, I have always suspected that the paintings must have more shared elements, defining the genre, than a mere list of names.

It was not until I ignored the pictorial rendering of the individual Sibyls and the order in which they were presented and made a study of the text instead, that the startling consistency and uniformity of the early painted cycles was revealed. That consistency of text and its attribution to particular Sibyls is maintained regardless of place or date, of artistic style or school, regardless of the political and geographic boundaries of the time, whether to the south of Rome, in the mountains of the north west near to the French border or on the river plains to the east of Venice, whether designed in the 1430s or as late as 1507.¹⁴⁹

RECORDING THE DATA

A method in which it is easy to see the uniformity of text throughout Italy and the rare departures from the canonical text

It is very hard for any observer to hold in mind the details of the variant renderings of twelve different Latin Sibylline oracles and their attribution to individual Sibyls in all the Cycles of Italy, or indeed to feel any enthusiasm for doing so. The detailed information is actually impossible to hold in mind and the task so daunting as to preclude the attempt. I did not myself discover the unifying principle of the Italian Sibyl Cycles till I found a way to

Agrippa. A fuller comparison of manuscript Sibyl lists may be found in Cornagliotti, pp XLII-XLIII Table 1.

¹⁴⁹ I have not so far found any Early Renaissance Sibyl Cycles in Southern Italy. The reasons are unclear.

record the oracles in a tabular manner where similarities and differences were immediately visually apparent.

Ignoring the names of the Sibyls, I concentrated on the oracles and gave each an identifying code letter. This codified list of quotations, identified by letter, could then form the left hand vertical axis of a chart. The horizontal base line would give the locations of the Sibyl cycles, arranged in chronological order. The chart would then show immediately whether all the sites were in fact using the same list of twelve quotations, and further, whether a given Sibyl always spoke the same quotation. Moreover, since it was chronologically arranged it would demonstrate any falling away from the canonical list as time went on.

Appendix 2, entitled '*Table of Sibylline Oracle Texts: their Location and Attribution*' comprises the list of Latin quotations, each translated into English and given an identifying code letter, and a chart showing the selection and attribution of quotations to the individual Sibyls in every known site with surviving text.

Until the finding of the Latin Revello Oracle List and my recognition of what it really was, it was impossible to recognise the startling uniformity of text throughout the wide bounds of what is now a united Italy.¹⁵⁰ That is because some of the source quotations recorded in the Revello list are very long indeed, as for example in the case of the Tiburtine. Since quite different small pieces of that whole quotation may be selected for a given fresco to fit restricted wall space, the consistent faithfulness among all frescos to a single canonical source for the Tiburtine has not before been apparent.

My method was to regard the Revello Manuscript list of oracles as a copy of a central source document. In my compilation of the chart, the Revello list was amended by two other

¹⁵⁰ The Transcription and Translation of the Revello Manuscript is printed in full under that title in Appendix 5.

manuscripts: the Edinburgh Manuscript and the Olomouc manuscript.¹⁵¹ Even though the handwritten Revello manuscript probably post-dates some of the frescos, it is a copy of an earlier source. The Revello Manuscript gives more extensive versions of the oracles than are found on any individual wall painting but it includes all the painted text therein.

When I began to construct the chart, I found I had discovered the defining and organising principle of the Early Renaissance Sibyl cycles in Northern and Central Italy. In all cases save two, whatever her ordinal number, the named Sibyl is given the same oracle. That is to say, the Samian Sibyl's oracle on the Orsini wall, for example, is from the same source quotation as is recorded for the Samian on the Revello manuscript. Moreover, that same saying, or a significant part of it, determined by the available space, consistently appears as her vaticination on all the frescos in Italy.

There is no space in the scope of the present work, which chronicles all the known painted cycles, to undertake a similar detailed analysis of Sibylline text in early Church drama. Suffice it to say here that there is a similar consistency of oracles in the fifteenth-century dramas of Northern Italy, from Piedmont to Florence and down to Rome. The named Sibyls commonly speak the same oracles as those found on the walls of the churches.

The earliest manuscript lists recording Sibylline appearance and oracles pre-date the frescos by decades. I do not think that the oracles were simply invented by some early dramatist for a play that became well-known and that that provided the source text. Rather, I think both plays and frescos drew on the same source. For a dramatist simply to invent oracles is contrary to the habit of mind of the early, mediaeval, dramatists. The Dramas are there to promulgate religious truth not invention. Humorous scenes in the plays may be pure invention, but when putting Holy Prophecy into the mouths of 'real' personages, Prophets or Sibyls, *auctoritas* was essential to Truth. It is likely that an independent source exists,

¹⁵¹ Státní-Vědecká Knihovna, MS. M II 58 (ex I IV 8, XV sec), c. 248r-v. The source of the Revello manuscript seems to have been damaged and lacked one oracle, with another incomplete. With those exceptions, however, it is the fullest manuscript record of oracles.

possibly Classical or Pseudo-Classical, found by an early Humanist. This dissertation goes some way to tracing its origin.

The Contribution of the Written and Printed Word: Prescription and Description

It seems logical to assume that there are **two** kinds of surviving manuscript concerning the cycles. One is prescriptive, probably predating the dramas and the first painted cycle, preserving what is believed to be an authoritative record of the Sibyls prophecy. The other is descriptive, derived from the description of an existing fresco, perhaps in order to paint another one in a different place, or for some other purpose.

The Canonical Text

What I shall term ‘the Canonical Text’ must have been compiled or discovered in the late Mediaeval / early Renaissance period by a Humanist scholar. It contained a list of twelve Sibyls and their oracles. The manuscripts invariably describe the appearance of each Sibyl and attribute quotations. Sometimes costume is derived from descriptions found in ancient sources.

However, unlike the record of oracles, the appearance of the Sibyls varies from manuscript to manuscript, fresco to fresco, until late in the century, when conventions for some Sibyls such as the Libyan and the Erythraea emerge. The painters of frescos allow themselves complete freedom to ignore or conform to the descriptions of appearance, whilst maintaining strict adherence to the text of the oracles. They do not vary. It is clearly important to try to locate the origin of the canonical list.

Manuscript Sources

A full list of the known extant manuscripts describing the first (Orsini) fresco is given in the Bibliography. Many of these are difficult of access either geographically or

administratively.¹⁵² At present, I must work with the sources so far available to me. I have however, managed to gain access to an example of each kind of manuscript: prescriptive and descriptive. These are the Edinburgh Manuscript (Prescriptive) and the Olomouc Manuscript (Descriptive). These are reproduced in *facsimile* for the convenience of other scholars in Appendices 3 & 4. The Revello MS. is the third manuscript, whose contents are recorded in Appendix 5. It is an example of a manuscript written late in the process of transmission, in which variations occur, likely to be the result of clerical error and a damaged source manuscript.

The Edinburgh Codex

The Edinburgh text is perhaps the most important manuscript we have in relation to the Sibyl Cycles, since it may be either the source document itself, or a version of an original Greek source text, felt to be authoritative, used to construct the Orsini fresco.¹⁵³

To establish a date and place of origin, it is necessary to examine its provenance and physical appearance as well as internal textual evidence.

It came to Scotland from the Aragonese Library at Naples. The codex has oak board covers, covered with brown leather. The front cover bears the arms of Alphonso V, King of Naples (1442-58), founder of the Neapolitan library. Inside there is another set of arms in a childish hand, so far not identified.¹⁵⁴ However, both those arms were added later, after the manuscripts it contains were written, no doubt when the book came into the possession of the library at Naples. I can now say with some confidence from internal evidence, that the codex was likely to have been researched and compiled in Rome at a much earlier date.

¹⁵² Unfortunately, not all libraries are equally liberal in matters of access or even in replying to correspondence on the matter. Some texts are in monastic libraries where it is perhaps understandable, though regrettable, that the curators legitimately can feel themselves to be separate from the world.

¹⁵³ Facsimile in Appendix 3.

¹⁵⁴ Perhaps that of Ferrante, Alfonso's illegitimate son, who succeeded him in Naples.

Naples has a long history of interest in the Sibyls. Nicolò and Giovanni Pisano, who introduced the Sibyls into Northern Italian Christian art a century and a half before the Renaissance and the painted cycles, had roots in the South. The earliest example of a painted Sibyl in Italy is to be found at Sessa Aurunca, near Naples, painted in the eleventh century. Given a Neapolitan interest in Sibyls, this 'Edinburgh' codex, containing the list of Sibylline oracles, would therefore be a volume that the Library would wish to acquire.

The Edinburgh codex is listed in Borland's *Catalogue of the Western Mediaeval Manuscripts in Edinburgh University Library*.¹⁵⁵ There are four Sibyl Cycles in Scotland, though none at present in Edinburgh and all are later than the compass of this study.¹⁵⁶ The manuscript may have been brought to Scotland in order to design any one of these or some other now lost. It is not however, a seventeenth-century manuscript but was written in the *quattrocento*.

The contents of the Edinburgh codex containing the Sibyl manuscript.

This codex is not an arbitrary collection of manuscripts bound together for the sake of preservation and storage. It is a carefully assembled group of three manuscripts, all written in the same hand, concerning the status of Classical literature and the history of Rome.

This codex shows that, to justify resuming the study of pagan Classical texts, the early Humanists first appealed not only to St Augustine, who wrote only in Latin, but also to an earlier Greek authority, St Basil the Great. How very early in the Renaissance this codex was written became clear to me when I recognised both the real identity of the writer / translator

¹⁵⁵ Catherine R. Borland, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Mediaeval Manuscripts in Edinburgh University Library*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1916).

¹⁵⁶ These are: Aberdeen, Jameson House (engravings) 1615; Burntisland, Somerville House (painting) 1621; Stirling, Wester Livilands House, (painting), 1629. See Carlo De Clercq, 'Quelques Series italiennes de Sibylles' in *Bulletin di l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, XLVIII-XLIX, 1978-79 p. 28.

and the person to whom he dedicated his translation. I could thus date the manuscript based on the following evidence.

The codex contains three works, two of them translations from the Greek:

1. Leonardi Aretini ad Colutium Florentinum in Translatione Magni Basilii.

Leonardo Aretino to Coluccio of Florence: a translation of St Basil the Great.

2. Opusculum, ex Greco in Latinum conversum, De Oraculis Sibyllinis.

A small work, translated from the Greek into Latin, 'Concerning Sibylline Oracles'

3. Nomina Officiorum et Dignitatum Urbis Romae ac Officialium. Primo fuerunt reges –senatus ex populo Romano.

The names of the officials and dignitaries of the City of Rome from the early Kings to the Senate representing the people of Rome.

The first of these works is a translation of a work by St Basil the Great (c.330-79), *Ad Adulescentes*. Basil advises his nephew and other young men receiving the traditional Classical education, as to how the Christian can receive edifying moral instruction from his heritage of pagan Classical literature. It is the dedication by the translator of Basil's work that is able to yield a date for the codex. Borland in her Catalogue of Manuscripts has not, I think, realised the identity of *Leonardi Aretini*, the translator and *Colutium Florentinum* to whom the work is dedicated.

Leonardo Aretini is an alternative name for Leonardo Bruni (c. 1370-1444) who was one of the founding fathers of Humanism. He was Papal Secretary from 1405 and was later Chancellor of Florence for seventeen years from 1427 till his death. An elegant Ciceronian in style, he made Latin translations of many Greek works including Plato, Aristotle and Plutarch. He revived the study of Greek in the West. Here, he translates a text from an authoritative Greek Father of the Church, founder of Eastern Orthodox monasticism, which in effect justifies the whole Humanist enterprise.

Recognition of the person to whom he dedicated the work provides a *terminus ad quem* date for the translation. 'Colutium Florentinum' I recognise as Coluccio Salutati (1301-1406), Bruni's mentor and predecessor as Chancellor of Florence for thirty-one years from 1375 till his death. He was a master of style. That tyrannical and terrifying despot, the Duke of Milan, said that one scathing letter from Salutati was more damaging than a thousand horsemen.¹⁵⁷ Salutati's Ciceronian high Latin style was not his only contribution to Humanism. He too was a founding father of the study of Greek. He combined his deep knowledge of Classical texts with a serious disciplined concern for scholarly detail. He collated and edited manuscripts having an understanding of the manner in which texts are corrupted that was very unusual and innovatory for his time, being a pioneer in this field. His library was one of the most significant collections of Classical texts in the West. He used his political power and network of influence to help him acquire these.¹⁵⁸ This makes him a likely eager recipient of a present from his former pupil, which was the translation of a Greek text of St Basil the Great justifying the study of the Classical pagan texts by Christians.

Salutati sought out and invited the Byzantine scholar, Manuel Chrysoloras, to Florence, which was one of the most significant events in the history of Humanism. Chrysoloras's presence and teaching began the revival of a widespread knowledge of the Greek language and literature in the West. Having learned Greek from Chrysoloras, Salutati taught Poggio Bracciolini and Leonardo Bruni himself.

Once one has identified the translator and the person to whom the translation is dedicated, the reason for the selection of these texts and their date is clear.

¹⁵⁷ See L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 134-136, and Britannica 2001, various eds [on CD-ROM]

¹⁵⁸ See L. D. Reynolds, and N. G. Wilson, p. 135, for a detailed conspectus of Salutati's collection of manuscripts.

The date of the translation of *Ad Adulescentes* must be before Salutati's death in 1406. It is true that sometimes works are dedicated to a dead friend, but there is no indication here of *in piam memoriam*. It is rather, the dedication of a proud student to his living mentor, aware that he has achieved something significant and splendid. The dedication is a direct address to a living Salutati, '*Ego tibi hunc librum ex media Coluti ut aiunt Grecia...*' in which he speaks of his, 'copious, infinite and multitudinous pains' taken in the work. This being so, the translation must be before 1406 and is likely to have been done after Bruni was made Papal Secretary in Rome the previous year, since the third and last document of the codex is a history of the eminent persons of Rome from the Kings to the Republic. Innocent VII reigned in Rome from 1404 to 1406 and in a brief but stormy reign was nevertheless persuaded to reorganise the University of Rome and institute a Chair of Greek, no doubt encouraged by his Secretary. This makes the date of the Codex as early as 1405-6, assuming all three works to have been assembled at the date of the translation from Basil.

It has been supposed that Cardinal Orsini's fresco (1431-1434) was the first appearance of the canon. If the whole Edinburgh codex, including the list of Sibylline oracles, was compiled by Bruni and written by himself or his amanuensis at the date of his translation of St Basil, then the origin of the canonical text of Sibylline oracles is much earlier. The Edinburgh codex simply writes out the list of descriptions of the Sibyls and their oracles with no preamble and no title. This suggests that it was sufficiently recognisable in the very early years of the fifteenth century, as not to need explanation, other than 'translated from the Greek by Leonardo Aretino (Bruni)'. It is frustrating that he felt no further need to identify the source. He may be implying that this too was culled from St Basil. It is not however in the version of *Ad Adulescentes* that we now have. It may however have been appended to the Greek text of Basil that Bruni was working from and assumed to be the work of the Saint.

If we are to take the Edinburgh Manuscript as evidence that the list of Sibylline oracles was extant as early as 1405-6, it is crucial to examine the evidence that the codex was conceived as a unity and written at the same time as the translation of Basil by Bruni or his

amanuensis. It could, after all, be a later document making a compendium of three texts, only one of which, the Basil translation, is as early as 1405-6.

Prima facie, the evidence is that it is likely to be the original document, a compilation produced in its entirety in 1405-6, by Bruni for Salutati. There is no direct evidence to the contrary but since this document takes the date of list of Sibylline oracles much further back than previously imagined, it is as well to proceed with caution.

The codex could be an arbitrary selection of three disparate texts by different hands simply sewn and bound together for convenience, at a later date than when some of the original items were written. The fact is however, that the whole codex is produced by the same hand and is a conscious effort to make a thing of beauty. The second text (the Sibylline Oracle list) begins half way down the page at the point where Basil's text ends and has a title that announces that it too is a translation from the Greek by Bruni. This shows that the codex was conceived and executed as a unity.

It could however be a beautiful later compilation of three texts, two of which are certainly by Bruni. That would account for consistency of hand. However, whilst it is impossible to show that that is not so, there is no reason or evidence to suppose that it is. Given the very personal nature of the dedication to Salutati on the first text, given the continuity of authorship of the second, the Sibyl list, and given the extremely expensive beautiful miniatures and illustrations, it is more likely that this is volume is what it says it is, a codex produced by Bruni, as a presentation gift to Salutati.

The crucial evidence as to the date of the codex is the handwriting, the orthographical style.

The style of handwriting

We must examine whether the handwriting, a beautiful round Italian Minuscule not Italic, could have been produced in Rome as early at that date. If it could not, if that style had not then been invented, then the codex must be a later compilation. What then were the origins of Italian Minuscule and could this document be as early as 1406?

It is precisely the nature of the handwriting that is the most compelling evidence for the early date. In the history of the development of clear Renaissance handwriting and eventually, type faces based on that handwriting, the names of Coluccio Salutati and his Florentine pupils were the most important.

In Florence, Petrarch (1304-1374) had started the collection of ancient manuscripts, coins and medals. This was the basis of the attempt to produce a clearly legible elegant Classical style in Italy as opposed to the German Gothic script. During the course of time, the Gothic script had become stylistically mannered, dense and difficult to read. Petrarch and others collected early texts. These were often in the Carolingian Minuscule script, in lapidary style with display lines, characteristic of manuscripts of the ninth to the twelfth century, i.e. the style of ancient inscriptions cut in stone. Early Humanists associated Cicero himself with the style of lettering in the early manuscripts in which they were accustomed to read his works. Coluccio Salutati followed Petrarch as the leader of the group of scholars in Florence later called the Humanists. It was Salutati himself and his pupils, Poggio, Bruni and others, who developed the writing style that they came to call *Lettera Antica* because it was based on the clear, beautiful old Carolingian Minuscule. Poggio Bracciolini, who was with Bruni, the pupil of Salutati, first developed the round, formal style that was later to form the basis for the 'Roman' font when printing began.

Later in the fifteenth century, Bracciolini introduced the square capital letters used on ancient Roman monuments. In 1460, Filiciano, a calligrapher, first demonstrated how to construct the monumental Roman capitals according to geometric rules. Poggio and Bruno's friend, Niccolo Niccoli, designed the slightly slanting elegant italic script, designed for the fast, legible copying of Classical texts for libraries. This was later called *Italic* as opposed to *Roman*, and was used by Albertus Manutius in Venice when he first produced cheap, accessible, but rigorously edited versions of Classical texts for scholars, on paper rather than vellum.

The Edinburgh Manuscript is then, an Italian Minuscule text, in the writing developed in early fifteenth century by Salutati, Poggio and the circle to which Bruni belonged. The

important fact however, is that it is written before the advent of the fully developed square Roman capitals; note particularly the capital M. This means that the document must be dated to the last years of the fourteenth century or the early years of the fifteenth. (See **illustration opposite**) It seems then, that what we have here is produced by one of the small group of Florentine Humanists developing this hand in the early years of the fifteenth century. Taking this into account, together with the dedication to Salutati, the date of the Edinburgh Codex itself is then likely to be before 1406, and it is likely to be itself the present to Coluccio Salutati, not a copy of that. This means we can rely on a much earlier date for the presence in Italy of the Canonical List of Sibylline Oracles than was hitherto assumed. We should also take Leonardo Bruni's ('Aretino's') word that its source was in a Greek, not a Latin, manuscript.



Edinburgh Codex: Title page of the translation of St. Basil the Great's address to young men on the manner in which Christians are to read Classical (Pagan) Literature, *Ad Adulescentes*. At the head of the page is a dedication by its translator, Leonardo Aretino, (c. 1370-1444) better known by his cognomen, Leonardo Bruni, to *Colutium Florentinum*, i.e. Colutio Salutati (1331-1406), Chancellor of Florence.

The crest painted at the bottom is probably a later addition as it is less well executed, in a different and looser style and transgresses the page layout. Borland identifies it as the crest of Alphonso the fifth of Spain and first of Naples, the founder of the Aragonese Library in Naples, ruling Naples from 1442-58. Note the characteristic capitals, particularly M before Filiciano's Roman style.

The Significance of the Edinburgh Manuscript

When eventually I was able to examine the Edinburgh manuscript and a *facsimile* was secured, I realised that I might at last have found what I sought: an early copy of the original prescriptive text, understood by Humanists to have a particular canonical authority.¹⁵⁹

The idea that there must have been two kinds of texts, prescriptive and descriptive, is not one that I have seen discussed. All scholarship that I have read assumes that the Edinburgh Manuscript is a description of the Orsini wall. This is because its contents absolutely agree with manuscripts, like the Olomouc Manuscript, which undoubtedly describe the Orsini fresco. An important difference is that the order in which the Sibyls are arranged is quite different on the Edinburgh Manuscript from that on manuscripts known to be descriptions of the Orsini wall paintings, which agree with each other and preserve the Varronian order recorded in Lactantius, even though they do not take their oracles from Lactantius. However, close reading and translation of the whole Edinburgh Codex in which the list of Sibylline oracles is recorded goes far to establish a very early date and the likely origin of the canonical text.

Authorities writing about the frescos invariably see St Augustine as the Father of the Church to which the early Humanists have recourse on the subject of Sibyls. An authority other than Augustine has to be sought, since the Sibylline Oracles on the frescos do not appear to come from his writing, nor from Lactantius, to whom he refers. The early single Sibyl, appearing in the Liturgy and in the eleventh-century fresco at Sessa Aurunca speaks Augustine's acrostic. However, the ten or twelve Sibyls of the Italian cycles, with the exception of the stone cycles of Rimini and Siena, speak a consistent collection of oracles not contained in Augustine or Lactantius. That origin is likely to have been an equally early text.

¹⁵⁹ Through the kindness of the librarian at Edinburgh University, Jean Archibald and Ian Goddard of its photographic department.

Apart from the Edinburgh manuscript, all other manuscripts I have seen simply give Latin versions of the oracles, and do not mention that the oracles are taken from the Greek. I have not yet been able to find the source text in an early Patristic document or anywhere else. However, I have been able to establish that the canonical list of oracles existed, and was well recognised at a much earlier date than was previously thought, before the advent of the first Sibyl Cycle. The Edinburgh manuscript provides evidence of this. It also directs scholarly attention to a possible source in Greek Christian literature, a fact seemingly unknown to all previous writers on the topic. It would be satisfying to announce that I had found a Patristic Greek source, but that may take a life-time's research. I can however, now point the direction in which to look. All previous scholarship has assumed that there was a Latin source in the Western Church tradition for these oracles, since they only appear in Latin in the Sibyl Cycles of Italy.

The Significance of the Revello Text

The Revello Manuscript is a much later prescriptive, not descriptive, list of Sibylline oracles found in the text of the Revello Passion play, now in the Laurentian Library in Florence.¹⁶⁰ The Revello Manuscript is taken from a source independent of the Orsini wall. It has longer versions of the oracles.

This provides us with a mystery. Bruni gives no indication of the identity of the Greek text he is translating. He also does not give any indication that he is curtailing or editing the oracles. With the exception of the two dubious oracles, those of the Hellespontine and the Erythraean Sibyls, the Revello text contains all of Bruni's text but gives longer versions. That being so, we can either assume a second and fuller version of the Greek text from which Bruni was working, or that the extra material in the Latin translation had at some stage been added arbitrarily. It is not likely that these extra sentences were added fancifully and arbitrarily and they do appear on frescos. However, at present I am not able to offer an account of the Greek source material and can only note the disparity.

The Revello MS. does two important things: it provides a record of the fullest version of all but two of the selected canonical oracles (Hellespontine and Erythraean), and it provides a record of a late stage in the circulation of manuscripts when, probably because of damage to the source MS., two of the original oracles had been lost and two more substituted. These variations are found at subsequent dates in painted cycles. Thus the date and source of a change in canonical usage can be determined. The Revello Manuscript is thus a record, as well as the probable source, of corrupt text on the frescos.

The latest possible dates for the Revello Manuscript are the 1490s or the very first years of the 1500s. This can be calculated from the fact that the painted cycles, Saluzzo, 1507, Tivoli, 1508, and Rome St Maria del Popolo 1509, all show the new Revello Hellespontine oracle, rather than the canonical oracle for that Sibyl.

¹⁶⁰ Biblioteca Laurenziana di Firenze, MS. 1190 (olim 1264) del Fondo Ashburnham.

The manuscript is that of a single hand throughout, in *corsiva libreria* script. One cannot of course assume that it is necessarily the hand of the play's author. The list is placed at the beginning of the text before act one commences. The editor of the present Italian printed edition, is Cornagliotti. She expresses doubts, that the Sibyls, 'apparently, if they really do' come on at the beginning of the act, one after another, and recite in Latin, the substance of speeches which they are to repeat only minutes later in rhyming vernacular, each speech being rendered rhythmically between two other speeches from male Hebrew prophets.¹⁶¹

Because in making this study of art, not drama, I realised that there was a 'canonical document', it was possible to recognise what this list, inserted into the manuscript text of the play, really was. The Franciscan playwright knew his job far better than to bore the audience by lengthy repetition. In writing the play, he was referring to his list of 'authentic' utterances of the Sibyls. That list had considerable significance and value. The utterances of the male prophets that composed the rest of the first part of his play could readily be found in the Bible. However, copies of the list of the Sibyls' words and appearance were scarce. He therefore carefully preserved that list, along with the text of his play. It was kept in place at the beginning of the document, before the start of his drama. It formed no part of the drama but was his source for the Sibyl's speeches. When I read the Revello text I realised that what I was looking at was another version of the list I had so long desired to find.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ See Cornagliotti. pp. 5-6 and 15 et seq. The text is not translated into English.

¹⁶² I think that the reason that one speech of the Sibyl is accompanied by two from the male prophets is nothing to do with gender prejudice or the status of women in fifteenth-century Northern Italy. Frankly, when considered as a script for actors to speak from, the first act of the Revello play, with no action and long prophetic utterance, is boring. It would not hold an audience. I think there is a missing element: glorious music. The printed libretto of an oratorio does not make dramatic reading. Music was a very important element whose presence was not always recorded on the written script. [See Richard Rastall, *The Heaven Singing: Music in Early English Religious Drama*, Vol. I., (Cambridge:

Cornagliotti, in speaking of the sources of the play, says that all the authorities she has read attribute the source of this Latin list to that found in the first edition of *Discordantiae sanctorum doctorum Hieronymi et Augustini* of Filippo Barbieri, an edition that I have not myself seen.¹⁶³ However, despite her characteristic impressive scholarly rigour, she is unaware of the text preserved in the pre-existing frescos of Northern Italy. She thinks they mainly belong to the second half of the fifteenth century. She mentions the Orsini fresco, but only lists the names, not recording the oracles. The study of the History of Art throws light on the literary issues with which Cornagliotti struggles. Barbieri cannot have been the origin and source of the *Vaticina Sibyllarum* list, nor of the two 'new' Sibyls, Agrippa and Europa, he must simply be doing what the author or copyist of the Revello play was doing: preserving a copy of the pre-existing canonical list. The Sibyl cycles, commencing with the Palazzo Monte Giordano in Rome in 1425, nearly half a century before Barbieri's work, were using exactly this Latin list. If Barbieri is not the source of the list, as he is not, then the Revello play need not be after 1481, the publication of Barbieri's *Discordantia*, as Cornagliotti assumes. It may be a very much earlier drama. I can note this here but unfortunately not pursue it within the scope of this dissertation.

As we have seen, the Revello manuscript contains longer oracles than the Orsini Cycle or any known painted Cycle. It also contains all known examples of text found in frescos for any given Sibyl. The Cycles appear to select sentences or phrases from this source document

D. S. Brewer, 1996)]. There is no reason to think that music was excluded from Italian Church Drama. The pattern in the Revello play is: Major Prophet, Minor Prophet, Sibyl, repeat. I think that what we have here is a sustained and dramatic trio sung by Bass, Tenor, and boy Soprano.

¹⁶³ Cited by Cornagliotti, p. xxxviii. That first printed edition, not illustrated, was published in Rome, on the first of December, 1481 from the press of Giovanni Filippo La Legname. The second, widely dispersed, illustrated edition was published also in Rome, less than a year later by Georg Herolt and Sixtus Reissinger. Earlier written manuscripts exist. However, the earliest conjectural date places them somewhere between 1463 and 1471. The Roman fresco of Cardinal Orsini that uses the content of this list was painted in 1425.

or its antecedents, to fit the architectural space available. This is the reason that some painted Sibyls appear to be saying different oracles than the identical Sibyl in another painting. They have selected different fragments from the source quotation. The document preserved in the Revello play contains all known manifestations of text appearing in frescos and those quotations show a consistency of attribution to individual Sibyls. The only exceptions are, as we have seen, the Hellespontine and the Erythraean Sibyls.

Errors in Transmission: the Imperfections of the Revello Manuscript copy of the Canonical List

I do not think that the immediate source manuscript, from which the Revello scribe took his copy of the canonical list, was preserved intact. The use of the canonical list is so widespread over a vast geographical area that, by the 1490s, it is likely that what were in circulation were copies of copies of copies. Here at Revello, the order of the Sibyls for example, has been changed from the Varronian / Orsini order.¹⁶⁴ There is also internal evidence in the Revello manuscript that the source document was possibly frail and certainly damaged. Even the great Humanist scholars, who collected and edited classical texts, displayed what we now might see as a cavalier attitude to their ancient source texts. Once a fair copy had been made and carefully edited, the damaged and frail originals were more often than not thrown away.¹⁶⁵ The Cluny and Lodi manuscripts of Cicero, the Verona manuscripts of Catullus and Pliny have not survived. There is only a partial manuscript remaining of the Hersfeld Tacitus. The same process occurred in the sixteenth century.¹⁶⁶ The reverence for authority was a reverence for matter not material. This meant that scribal error or misguided interpretations and editing could not later be compared with the writing

¹⁶⁴ See Appendix 5: Transcription and Translation of the Revello Manuscript.

¹⁶⁵ See Reynolds, L. D. and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p.139.

¹⁶⁶ See Reynolds and Wilson, p.140.

on the original document, introducing a whole new level of scholarly difficulty in recovering accurate versions of texts.

Internal evidence that its source was damaged is found in the entry for the seventh Sibyl, the Sibilla Agrippa. At the end of the description of her physical appearance the manuscript reads:

et sinistram manum tenens ostendendo deorsum, dicit sic, cum breve scripto, dicit sic:

The addition, *after the end of the physical description*, of the parenthetical '*cum breve scripto*', before repeating '*dicit sic*:' seems to me to be the careful annotation of the scholarly scribe referring to the source manuscript from which he is copying. Perhaps the Latin in the source manuscript uses shortening marks very heavily and he has had to interpret the writing extensively and is carefully noting that fact.

Elsewhere in the Revello manuscript we find more evidence that this is the work of a scrupulous copyist. The description of the ninth Sibyl, the Sibilla Erithraea, has a blank in the manuscript where the figures stating her age should be given, thus: '*Sibilla Eritheo, annorum ---, in Babilonia nata,*' The Revello manuscript is not damaged. It simply leaves a blank space. It is a careful space, followed by a comma. Were this a work of imagination, numbers could easily be supplied. However, in view of the orthographical parenthesis earlier, it is a more convincing proposition that a source manuscript was damaged or illegible. This Erythraean oracle appears in no other manuscript that I am aware of. It is as though the Revello copyist, finding irretrievable destruction of text, provided an oracle from another source. I do not yet know what that source can be.

The case of the aberrant Erythraean Sibyl is important and interesting. She is the only Sibyl with more than one variant in the Sibyl cycles. Valgrano (1460s-70s), quite early in the development of the genre, is the first cycle where there is a misattribution of oracle to the Erythraean. There she speaks the words spoken by the Europa in all other cycles. Since only two inscriptions survive at this site, it is not possible to compare this with the Valgrano

Europa, which has been destroyed.¹⁶⁷ This change in attribution may be a scribal confusion of names, especially if recorded in shortened form, both having *E* and *r* towards the beginning of the word. However, as will be discussed later in this dissertation, the Erythraea is what might be called the ‘wild card’ in the pack of Sibyls. I suspect an early mistake or lacuna in a much used copy of the prescriptive list.

Whatever happened at Valgrana, I believe that the Revello Manuscript, whilst being essentially a copy of the original prescriptive list, is a slightly inaccurate version. In every wall painting that I have seen, all over Italy, the Erythraean Sibyl speaks an oracle that is, in the Revello List recorded as the speech of the Hellespontine. The only exception is the fresco at Casa Cavassa, at Saluzzo (1507), hardly any distance from Revello, which follows what I regard as a mistake in the Revello manuscript’s source document. All other Cycles attribute this oracle to the Erythraean. I think the likely explanation is that the source manuscript from which the Revello Scribe worked had the Sibyl’s name written under her oracle. This is common practice in the early painted cycles, (See subsequent entry for Valgrana p. 287). Part of his source document was missing or destroyed, a lacuna in the text, which obliterated the name under the (Erythraean) Sibyl’s oracle and both oracle and name of the Hellespontine Sibyl. He had two missing Sibyl names (Erythraean and Hellespontine) and one missing oracle. The scribe was therefore compelled to guess the identity of the speaker of the anonymous oracle and provide a new oracle for the other missing Sibyl. He guessed wrongly that the anonymous oracle belonged to the Hellespontine Sibyl, and found a new oracle for the Erythraean.

The Casa Cavassa fresco (1507), so near to Revello, copies the Revello list in misattributing the Erythraean Sibyl’s oracle to the Hellespontine.¹⁶⁸ It then has to find an

¹⁶⁷ See ‘Table of Oracles’ in Appendix 2 for a clear diagrammatic representation of the pattern of erroneous attribution in connection with the Erythraean Sibyl.

¹⁶⁸ The second of the two dedicatory petitions at the beginning of the Revello play is to the Marquis of Saluzzo.

oracle for the Erythraean, and has recourse to Lactantius. It does not choose the same quotation as that appearing in the Revello list. This leads to the conclusion that the two compilers, working in close geographical proximity, were working from the same damaged source, rather than that the Casa Cavassa scholar was following the Revello list. Pinturicchio, painting Sibyls in Rome at Santa Maria del Popolo, at roughly the same time as the Casa Cavassa Sibyls were painted, also follows the Revello and Casa Cavassa version of the Hellespontine Oracle.

Once the precise limits of accuracy in the Revello list are known, i.e. once it is known that the texts for the Erythraean and Hellespontine Sibyls are unreliable, the rest of the document is of immense value as it gives longer versions of all the canonical oracles.

Later frescos incorporate some of the additional material in the Revello text, sometimes leaving out the sections of oracle recorded by Bruni, but maintaining a consistency of attribution. That is, the painted Tiburtine Sibyls for example, with only one exception, all draw their oracles from the Revello extended Tiburtine quotation and no other. They may be superficially dissimilar because different extracts have been chosen from the long Tiburtine oracle recorded in the Revello list, but they never use material from a different Sibyl. The Revello list then is invaluable as a source of reference for identifying the identity of Sibyls in frescos where the surface has been partially defaced. Now that this is known, once identity is established, iconographic comparisons can be made that were never before possible.

As to the two unreliable oracles in the Revello MS., when reconstructing the theoretically accurate canonical source document, the text given at Revello for the Hellespontine can be recorded as that of the Erythraean, since it appears in the mouth of the Erythraean in all earlier frescos. The missing Hellespontine oracle is available to us, perhaps in a reduced form, by consulting the Edinburgh and other manuscripts. The oracles in the Edinburgh manuscript are those found on the Orsini wall, the first of the Cycles. I also refer to the sections of the Tongerlo MS. Available to me. That is the method by which I have

arrived at a theoretically accurate version of the original canonical list. This is to be found in *Appendix 2, 'Table of Sibylline Oracle Texts'*.

A Descriptive Manuscript: the Olomouc Manuscript

The other kind of manuscript concerning Sibyls has a secondary derivation different from that of the Edinburgh and Revello manuscripts. It is descriptive not prescriptive. That is it makes no claim to record the original words of the Sibyls preserved in an ancient text, it simply describes an existing fresco. The importance of the Olomouc manuscript is that it is a contemporary, detailed, eye-witness account of the Orsini fresco in Rome that was the origin of the whole genre in Central and Northern Italy.

The Olomouc manuscript, in *facsimile*, transcribed and translated and appearing in Appendix 4, is an example of the descriptive list. It was compiled as part of an inventory of all the Church buildings and their fixtures and fittings in Rome, probably by a Church functionary responsible for these.

There are slight variations in the Latin oracular text and wide variations in the descriptions of physical appearance when compared with the Edinburgh MS. The Edinburgh MS. has minimal descriptions and individual artists felt free to invent appearance, except where very particular and singular attributes were mentioned. Variations in text are to be expected. There were regional variations in the conventions regarding the spelling of Latin in the early Renaissance. It should not be forgotten that it was then a spoken language. It is also scarcely surprising that variations and mistakes are evident given the conditions under which the writers took notes. They were not comfortably in their study copying from a list from a book, but either standing in the room, perhaps writing with a quill and all its attendant inconveniences, or writing down what they remembered soon after seeing the fresco. Even modern researchers find many difficulties. If the Sibyls are high in the roof, they may not be seen clearly. The oracles may be partly obscured by architecture or immoveable furniture. These early writers worked without convenient pens and with no photographic aid. We should not be surprised that slight variations in spelling and wording occur.

Having an awareness of the consistency of text in such widely scattered locations and some idea of the methods and hazards involved in the transmission of that text, we can now examine the transmission of the visual image of the Sibyls and the effect of the invention of printing on iconographic conventions.

PART II: TRANSMISSION OF TEXT AND IMAGE IN THE EARLY RENAISSANCE: CONTINUED

CHAPTER II: TRANSMISSION OF THE PRINTED IMAGE

CHAPTER II: TRANSMISSION OF THE PRINTED IMAGE AND ITS EFFECT ON THE PAINTED FRESCOS: BALDINI AND BARBIERI BALDINI ENGRAVINGS (1471-1479) AND BARBIERI WOODCUTS (1481)

There are two known surviving Early Renaissance Italian printed Sibyl cycles: the engravings of Baccio Baldini and the woodcuts of Barbieri. There are other surviving printed Sibyl cycles but they are often derivative of Baldini and Barbieri and are mostly later than the period with which this study is concerned. They are also not Italian, so they have no influence on the frescos in Italy at this period. Those of Baldini and Barbieri however, are highly significant in the history of printing and the development of pictorial conventions adopted by less ephemeral art forms when portraying Sibyls.

These printed images are particularly important because they can be seen to have a direct effect on the beautiful cycle at Siena, being a primary source for many of the designs there, and also on the Sibyls at Saluzzo, both the carved bosses in the church and the painted Sibyls in the Casa Cavassa. This is an early example of the power of the cheap print to affect significant works of art in the culture in which it circulates.

Early Printing

Whilst many are aware that Gutenberg invented printing in about 1450 and the first printing press in Italy was set up at the Benedictine monastery of Subiaco near Rome, in 1462-3, the history of the printed image is less well known.

In Europe, textile printing came long before the printed word or pictorial printing on paper. It occurs as early as the sixth century. The designs were mainly repeated decorative patterns. Printing on paper developed from textile printing, following the introduction of paper from the East. It came from China via the Arab civilisation. The first European paper was made in 1151, at Xativa (modern Játiva) in Spain. Soon afterwards, paper was made in

France and then in Germany and in Italy notably by Fabriano, who started to manufacture it in 1276. This would be a cheaper substitute for vellum, and would be used for manuscripts.

Woodcuts were the first form of printing on paper, and these early woodcuts were playing cards. They were printed in quantity and the term *Kartenmahler* or *Kartenmacher* ("painter or maker of playing cards,") is first used on a German document of 1402. Documents from Italy and France from the middle of the fifteenth century mention wood blocks for the printing of playing cards. The earliest dated pictorial woodcut is a *Madonna with Four Virgin Saints in a Garden* made in Germany in 1418.¹⁶⁸

Printed illustrations

Fifteenth-century printers continued to use the codex or manuscript book format for printed works and used woodcuts and engravings made to measure to print illustrations. The early fifteenth-century books, before 1500, have been called *incunabulae*, i.e., "swaddling clothes" or "cradle," from a Latin phrase used in 1639 to describe the beginnings of typography.

Albrecht Pfister of Bamberg was printing books illustrated with woodcuts about 1461. Copper engravings, which were better able to produce fine lines, were especially suitable for scientific, mathematical and anatomical illustrations and the reproduction of maps; but they were much more difficult to produce. They required a different press and introduced a separate process into printing. Because the developments in woodcut illustration were so impressive, giving subtle and delicate effects, there was no extensive use of engravings for about a hundred years. They are rare before 1550.

Printing was invented in medieval Germany but it was perfected in Humanistic Italy. The first printing press in Italy arrived very early, in 1462-63. It was founded at the Benedictine monastery of Subiaco, near Rome, which had strong German connections and a famous scriptorium. The press was founded by Cardinal Torquemada, uncle of the Inquisitor.

¹⁶⁸ See Britannica 2001 [CD-ROM] entry for 'Woodcut'.

He employed two German printers, Konrad Sweynheim and Arnold Pannartz. Lactantius's *Divine Institutes* was the first complete book to be printed in 1465. In 1467 however, they moved to Rome, where the church encouraged the production of cheaper books. Other cities soon followed in founding presses. By 1500, Venice had no fewer than 150 presses.

Two Venetian printers exerted a decisive influence on the form of the book: Nicolas Jenson, who perfected the Roman typeface in 1470, and Aldus Manutius, the greatest printer-publisher of his time, founder of the famous Aldine press. Aldus began printing in 1490 with a series of Greek texts. He then began to produce cheap, "pocket editions." These could now be commercially profitable because of the increase in the number of potential readers produced by the Humanist movement. Beginning in 1501, Manutius produced six titles a year for the next five years. He published a series of Latin texts that were peerless, both as examples of outstanding Humanist scholarship and in terms of their visual elegance. Aldus printed editions of 1,000, instead of the more usual 250, which kept down the cost and so increased the sales. He used an Italic type designed for him by Francesco Griffo, which had greater clarity, elegance and economy of space on the page. *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, printed by Aldus Manutius in 1499, is a supreme example of the early perfection of the woodcut and of book illustration in general. The Aldine editions were widely copied and pirated. Their dolphin and anchor was one of the first instances of a publisher's colophon.

Before the invention of printing, manuscript books in Europe could be numbered in thousands. By 1500, after only 50 years of printing, there were more than 9,000,000 books. These figures show the huge impact of the press. The rapidity with which it spread demonstrates the need for an artificial means of producing script, and the vulnerability of learning and literature up to that time. Once relatively cheap and numerous texts could be produced, the social effects of the transmission of learning to laity and to a far wider cross-section of society, in terms of social class, were radical.

The influence of the widespread transmission of identical printed images in establishing artistic conventions

The latter part of the fifteenth century was the first time that a close reproduction of an original drawing or painting could be reproduced in vast numbers with no loss in accuracy. A canonical or standard form of the visual image could now be produced as well as accurate repetition of text. This would have an effect on the expectations of the onlooker, and a vocabulary of forms and expectations about pictorial representation of particular themes and objects was introduced into the visual culture with an exactitude not possible before the advent of the printed image. It is often said that printing had a secondary role in that it simply mirrored or disseminated the images of important works of Art, to a wider audience. It is true that in Italy engravers worked with artists in a subordinate role, as for example Baldini, with Botticelli. It took some time in Italy, unlike Germany, before the production of woodcuts and engravings was seen as an important medium in itself, worthy of the attention of major artists. Not enough attention is given to the role of print in influencing the mode and manner of original painting. The establishment of the detailed iconographic conventions in regard to painted images of the Sibyls is a case in point.

THE ENGRAVED SIBYL CYCLES OF BACCIO BALDINI

There are two sets of highly influential prints that can almost be said to define the subsequent iconographical genre of the Sibyl Cycle: the engravings of Baccio Baldini and subsequent woodcuts of Filippo Barbieri. The first set of Florentine engravings of Sibyls, produced at some time between 1471 and 1479, are the fine-manner engravings, probably by Baccio Baldini.¹⁶⁹ These were followed by a second corrected broad-manner series, with

¹⁶⁹ There is some irresolvable scholarly debate about whether these engravings are really by Baccio Baldini. There is no space to enter into that debate here. I will therefore, as a matter of convenience and convention, refer to them as the Baldini engravings, since it is by that title that they are so widely known.

BARBIERI SIBYL PRINTS ESTABLISH A EUROPEAN VISUAL CONVENTION FOR SHOWING FEMALE EXEMPLARY OR SYMBOLIC FIGURES



Top: Barbieri first and second series prints. Bottom: Hardwick Hall, the Penelope embroidery

some alterations to the designs, and corrections and refinements to the printed text. These established conventions about the individual attributes of the Sibyls: swords, horns, garlands, snakes and the like. Many of these have to do with a Humanist understanding of the early origins of the Sibyls and their likely historical attire. Rimini is only place where there was any real attempt to render Classical dress before this set of prints. Some of these singular physical attributes appear there. It seems likely that Baldini, or the designer of the original costumes for Feo Belcari's *Annunciation*, a play of 1471, until now, generally and erroneously assumed to be the reason and stimulus for the publication of these prints, has looked at the Sibyls at Rimini, or consulted Valturio who produced the scheme for that series.

THE WOODCUT SIBYL CYCLES OF FILIPPO BARBIERI

The other sets of prints that had a strong influence in the rendering of Sibyls were the two series of woodcuts produced by Filippo Barbieri at the end of 1481, just before the pictures for the Sibyl Cycle at Siena were designed in 1482. In both of these, the Sibyls are presented standing with scrolls and attributes under rounded Renaissance arches. This became an Italian, and then a European standard manner of presenting first Sibyls and then any other female representation of insight or virtue such as the Four Cardinal Virtues, the three Graces and other qualities personified by women. Thereafter, Sibyls were commonly shown with individual attributes, framed by pillars supporting round arches. We can see this in the Sibyl Cycle at Bienno Church, very shortly after the production of the Barbieri prints. We see exactly such a convention appearing a century later, a thousand miles away in England in another medium, That is, in the important series of embroideries at Bess of Hardwick's house, Hardwick Hall. [See illustrations opposite and overleaf.] The story of the likely transmission of the Sibyl convention to this place is an interesting one and illustrative of the influence of the technology of the printed image and Barbieri's images of the Sibyls in particular, on artistic conventions and creation.



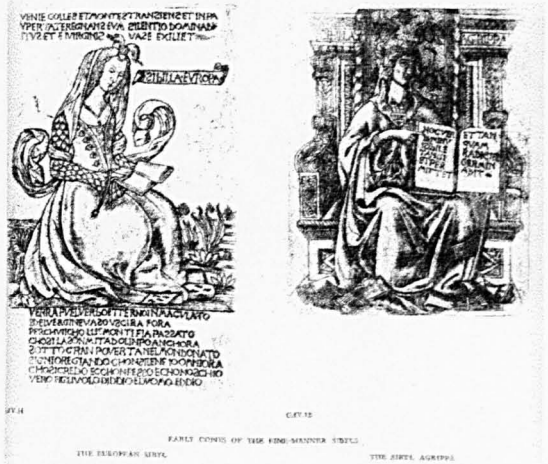
Hardwick Hall England: The figure of Penelope, one of the five great appliqué hangings that were in the Great Withdrawing Chamber in 1601. This demonstrates the convention of putting symbolic female figures of moral or religious status under round arches that was established by Barbieri's Sibyl engravings. Note the hand held up gesturing, with a pointing finger. This was the characteristic Sibyl pose.

BACCIO BALDINI

First, Fine Manner and Second, Broad Manner, Engravings: Sibilla Agrippa



Pirated copies of the first Fine Manner Engravings: Sibillae Europa and Agrippa



Early alternative Broad Manner Engravings: Chimica and Agrippa



It was not just that cheaply produced engravings copied serious works of art, but rather that serious works of art copied the conventions created and circulated by cheap and widely disseminated visual images. These engravings and woodcuts created an iconographic lore or language, a set of expectations about the appearance and attributes of the individual Sibyls that began to be recognised by both artists and the public.

Baldini's and Barbieri's were the first printed images of Sibyls and influenced many subsequent printed Sibyl Cycles all over Europe, especially in Germany and the Low Countries. They established the conventions for the rendering of Sibyls. However, they were very directly influential in terms of costume and attributes on succeeding works of art. This can be very clearly seen at Siena and Saluzzo, both in the Cathedral and in the Casa Cavassa, a private house.¹⁷⁰

1471-1479 BACCIO BALDINI'S SIBYL ENGRAVINGS

Baldini produced the first series of engravings of the twelve Sibyls of the Renaissance canon in the fine manner and a later series, correcting the textual mistakes in the first series, in the broad manner. There is also an early series of near copies of the first fine-manner engravings, perhaps pirated. There are examples of only eleven of these pirated Sibyl engravings so far found; the missing Sibyl is the Cimmerian. There are also two early broad-manner engravings of the Chimica and the Agrippa. However, they cannot really be described as copies, since they are more like each other than the originals. They are rather, alternative and rather bland renderings of the image which retain the Latin and vernacular inscriptions of the original series. [See illustration.]

The term '**fine manner**' is applied to the earliest method of engraving. In the fine manner, the shading of the figures is achieved by close, slightly irregular cross hatching, done with a tool called a *ciappola*. These early engravings were done by goldsmiths who

¹⁷⁰ For identification of the precise costume and attributes, see Appendix 9, 'Table to show Allocation of Attributes'. See also the individual entries for Siena and Saluzzo.

could produce the fine work in metal necessary in the production of *nielli*. There is a tendency in the printing process for these fine lines to run together and this produces almost the effect of a wash. The fine-manner engravings, paradoxically, have a much more primitive, less 'fine' appearance than the later and more sophisticated 'broad-manner' series. The engravings of the first series are sometimes somewhat over-decorated and intricate and lack the rhythm and restraint of the broad-manner engravings. It is possible to identify which of the fine-manner engravings are influenced by German masters and which by French and Italian designs. The fine-manner engravings have several textual errors: inappropriate admixtures of upper and lower case; some letters appearing back to front and inaccuracies as to word boundaries. Many of the textual errors of the first engravings have been corrected in the broad-manner series and the vernacular poetry revised.

Broad-manner engraving does not employ cross-hatching. It is a sparer, more elegant rhythmic, restrained technique done with a lozenge shaped tool, the *burin*, used by goldsmiths. It enabled longer, thicker, more flexible lines to be incised more deeply. This in turn meant that more impressions could be taken from the plate. The technique of the broad-manner print is much like that of the pen-draughtsman, who shades with very exact, equidistant parallel lines applied with only occasional 'return strokes' at an acute angle to the parallel lines. Landau and Pearshall assert that it was Francesco Rosselli who brought the broad-manner technique to Florence from Northern Europe in 1482 and kept it a closely guarded secret.¹⁷¹ They therefore attribute the second, broad-manner series of Sibyl and Prophet engravings to Rosselli, after 1482, making copies of Baldini. This would date the second series after the Sibyls on the floor of Siena Cathedral, (1481-2) ensuring that the obvious influence of the Baldini prints on this cycle must have come from the earlier fine-manner set. Many commentators have remarked the influence of Botticelli on the second, broad-manner series. Given his known association with the Finiguerra / Baldini workshop, I

¹⁷¹ Landau, David and Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print 1470-1550* (New Haven London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 73.

am not entirely at ease with the Rosselli attribution. Italian goldsmiths used the burin, and if Rosselli could learn a German technique, perhaps others did.

THE APPEARANCE AND COSTUMES IN THE BALDINI FIRST SERIES OF FINE-MANNER ENGRAVINGS

Hind cites three sources for the appearance of the Sibyls and their costumes.¹⁷² I shall identify them by geographical region: **A: French or Burgundian; B Italian influenced after the manner of the Pollaiuolo brothers; C: German influenced.**¹⁷³ I shall also note any striking individual attributes such as garlands, distinctive helmets, horns, swords and the like, some of which later become part of the Sibyl's iconographic identity. Some of these attributes appear for the first time on these engravings, although they appear on subsequent frescos. Others have already appeared at Rimini, which is the only preceding site where the Sibyls have distinguishing individual attributes and the only preceding instance where they are dressed in costume *all'antica*. Attributes, where they do occur, coincide with the Baldini engravings, which suggests an influence, either from the sculptures as executed or from the Humanist schemata and designs for the sculptures at Rimini.¹⁷⁴ Baldini was declared by Vasari to have no creative talent and simply reproduced the designs and paintings made by others. This makes it relevant and interesting to trace the engraved plates or other works of art from which he took his inspiration, thus relating the print production to the general context of the visual arts in Florence at the time.

¹⁷² See Arthur Mayger Hind: *Catalogue of Early Italian Engravings preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*, (London: Printed by order of the Trustees 1909-10), pp. 139-40.

¹⁷³ The reference numbers after the names of the Sibyls indicate the *British Museum Catalogue numbers*. They are catalogued in the same order as their appearance on the Orsini wall.

¹⁷⁴ I do not consider books or scrolls to be personal attributes but rather generic iconographic symbols for any Sibyl.

VENIET COLLE ET MONTE TRANZIENZ ET INPA
PERTATE REGNANZ EVM SILENTIO DOMINABE
ITVS ET E IVGINIZ VAZE EXILIT

SIBILLA EVROPA



VERRAQVELVERBO ETERNO INMACVIATO
EDELVERGINE VASOVSCIRA FORA
PERCHVI ICHOLLI EMONTI FIA PASSATO
CHOSI LASONMITA DOLINPO ANCHORA
SOTTO GRAN POVERTA NELMONDO NATO
ZINGHIOREGIANDO CHONSILENZIO OMNIORA
CHOSI CREDO ECCHONFESSO ECHONOSCHIO
VERO FIGLIVOL DIDDIO EDVOMO EDDIO

C.II.II.A

SIBY
LLA
EVRO
PA



VERRAQVELVERBO ETERNO INMACVIATO
EDELVERGINE VASOVSCIRA FORA
PERCHVI ICHOLLI EMONTI FIA PASSATO
CHOSI LASONMITA DOLINPO ANCHORA
SOTTO GRAN POVERTA NELMONDO NATO
SIGNOREGGIANDO CHONSILENZIO OGNIORA
CHOSI CREDO ECCHONFESSO ECHONOSCHIO
VERO FIGLIVOL DIDDIO EDVOMO EDDIO

C.II.II.B

THE SIBYLS: FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE EUROPEAN SIBYL

A: French or Burgundian

Persian Sibyl (C. II. 1) No Attributes.

Samian Sibyl. (C. II. 6) Attribute: Sword lying under her feet.

Sibilla Europa: (C. II. 11) Attribute: Bizarre topknot of hair at centre of her forehead.

The difference between French and Italian fashions in the fifteenth century is shown here very clearly. In French fashion, there is a high degree of artifice and artificiality, achieved by corsetry and tight lacing. The body is subjugated to the desirable shape and image. Italian fashion is Humanist; the human body dictates the shape of the garments, not the other way about. Italian costume is constructed in loose and flowing folds to show the attractiveness of the natural form. Humanist interest in the form and action of the human body is demonstrated in this respect for it in the matter of clothing. This is perhaps why, in the latter part of the fifteenth century, French garments can strike one as still essentially Mediaeval, Will over Flesh, forcing the body into an imposed perfection, whilst the aesthetics of Italian clothing seem to rejoice in human nature in itself.

French fashion can be identified by exaggerated, constricted, sculptural forms, of which the *henin* is a paradigm example. The look is of an etiolated elegance, rather like the shape of a pointed gothic arch in a French Cathedral. The 'steeple hat' or French *henin* seems to exemplify this. Two of these 'French' Sibyls, the Persica and the Samia, wear the *henin* draped with gossamer veiling, so typical of French aristocratic high fashion of the time.

The difference between French and Italian clothes is clearly seen by comparing the first fine-manner engraving of the *Sibylla Europa* [See illustration opposite. See following pages for the other French-influenced Sibyls.] with the second revised broad-manner version. The dress in the first version is French or Burgundian as is the bizarre and artificial, wired or stiffened sprouting hairstyle. Decorative details may be taken from other cultures. The ornament is much like *Finiguerra* and the flying scarf imitated from some German print



ECCHO PERCVI LABESTIA CHONCHVLCHATA
 SARA EPIA CONCEPTO ELSIR GO CONDO
 ELGRENBO DELLA VERGINE BEATA
 SALUTE FIA DELLA GENTE DEL MONDO
 SARANNO EPIEDI SVODIQVES TA NATA
 FORTESSA DAZOSTENERE OGNI PONDO
 VANTICINARE VNA PAROLA BASTA
 XPO GEV NACGERA DELLA CHASTA

II.1.A



ECCHO PERCVI LABESTIA CHONCHVLCHATA
 SARA EPIA CONCEPTO ELSIR GO CONDO
 ELGRENBO DELLA VERGINE BEATA
 SALUTE FIA DELLA GENTE DEL MONDO
 SARANNO EPIEDI SVODIQVES TA NATA
 FORTEZZA A SOSTENERE ONGNIGRANPO
 VANTICINARE VNA PAROLA BASTA
 XPO IESV NACGERA DELLA CASTA

C.II.1.B

THE SIBYLS: FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE PERSIAN SIBYL



C.II.6,A



C.II.6,B

THE SIBYLS : FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE SAMIAN SIBYL

but the dress is typically French. It displays a tightly laced front, forcing the bosom upward and away from the close cut round the rib cage. The hem is decorated with a heavy band of ermine, awkward to walk with, and the sleeves are stiffened and adorned with a fish-scale design, elegant but awkward at the wrist, having pendant stiffened cuffs. This is in sharp contrast to the second revised, broad-manner design, influenced by a native aesthetic. The costume gains its beauty from the sense of ease, comfort and natural grace, in gentle generous folds cut for the form of the young girl whose beauty does not require artificial forcing to reveal its charm. Her loose hair flows naturally down her back from under her cap fringed with flowers.

The tendency in the second, broad-manner series of the Baldini engravings is to eliminate French appearance. This may have a political motive with an eye to sales of the prints. An exactly similar transformation can be seen as between the first and second versions of the Persian Sibyl: French style is eliminated, changed to an Italian mode. The only exception is in the case of the Samian Sibyl. In the second series, the picture is almost a technical exercise in exact copying. Only the manifest faults in the lettering have been changed. The impression is that this was indeed an apprentice exercise, farmed out as a learning experience and perhaps in order to save the master's time and meet the series publication date.

B: Italian Pollaiuolo-esque or Botticellian

There are six Italian-influenced Sibyls:

Cimmerian Sibyl (Sibylla Chimica) (C. II. 4)

Erythraean Sibyl (C. II. 5)

Cumaeen Sibyl (C. II. 7)

Phrygian Sibyl (C. II. 9)

Sibilla Agrippa (C. II. 12)

Hellespontine Sibyl (C. II. 8).

Hind asserts that while these Sibyls (with the exception of the Hellespontine) show every sign of being influenced in style by Pollaiuolo, they are not by his hand and he suggests that the young Botticelli, in his period of service with Pollaiuolo when the *Uffizi Fortitude* was produced (about 1466-69) may have designed several of these Sibyls for Baldini to engrave.¹⁷⁵ A connection with the work of Botticelli is important in relation to the conception of the designs for Siena Cathedral to be discussed later.¹⁷⁶ Hind sees the Hellespontine as derived from German engravings. I dare to disagree, again believing that I have identified a conclusively persuasive alternative source, discussed below. I also find it very difficult to associate Botticelli with the stiff and rather awkward form of the Phrygian Sibyl as Hind suggests. Indeed, I believe I have discovered a different provenance for that Sibyl.

¹⁷⁵ See Arthur Mayger Hind, *op. cit.* p. 141.

¹⁷⁶ It is fair to say that Horne, the close collaborator of Hind, does not think that Botticelli was connected to the fine-manner workshop at this period, but rather later, at the time when he did the drawings for the Landino *Dante* of 1481, just at the time when the Sibyls of Siena were planned and executed.

SOURCES



Meister E.S. *St Thomas* not actually like Baldini's *Hellispontica* as is sometimes maintained



Phrygian Sibyl (C. II. 9) Attribute: Strange conical helmet with topknot. [See picture overleaf]

It is the highly distinctive attribute that enables me to trace a convincing chain of sources in Finiguerra's work for the Sibilla Frigia, not in that of Botticelli. The earliest appearance of the helmet that I have been able to find is in a copperplate engraving by Baldini to a design by Finiguerra, of *The Triumph of Love*. It recurs in a drawing of Talthybius, by Finiguerra for the Picture-Chronicle, whose probable date is the year of his death, 1464.¹⁷⁷ In the remaining Italian engravings, clear influence from Botticelli can be traced.

The Hellespontine Sibyl (C. II. 8): Hind asserts that the design for this Sibyl is German not Italian, believing it to have been copied in reverse, from the plate of *St Thomas* in the series of Apostles by Meister E. S.¹⁷⁸ [See picture opposite] Mindful and respectful of his enormous erudition and status in the field, I have to disagree and place this engraving amongst those influenced or directly designed by Botticelli, working from what I believe to be stronger pictorial evidence.

It can be clearly seen that the Libyan, Delphic and Tiburtine Sibyls are strongly influenced by the Meister E. S. engravings from the Evangelist Series, as Hind observes. The similarities of the seated posture, the body position and particularly the position of the hands, as well as the details of drapery, show that this is so. The *St Thomas* engraving, however, is not from the same Evangelist Series as are the other Sibyl sources. Whilst there is a coincidental similarity in hand position, as they rest on a staff, not a book, that really is

¹⁷⁷ See John Goldsmith Phillips, *Early Florentine designers and engravers: Maso Finiguerra, Baccio Baldini, Antonio Pollaiuolo, Sandro Botticelli [and] Francesco Rosselli: A comparative analysis of early Florentine nielli, intarsias, drawings, and copperplate engravings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), Illustrations III Drawings 2, p. 50.

¹⁷⁸ Bartsch, vol. 8 p. 56, formerly, Vol. VI (part I) in first edition, pp. 20-22.

PICTORIAL SOURCES FOR THE BALDINI PHRYGIAN SIBYL'S HELMET



Top: Baldini's Frigia. **Middle:** Finiguerra, detail from *The Triumph of Love*. **Bottom:** Talthybius, by Finiguerra for the *Picture-Chronicle*

BOTTICELLI'S INFLUENCE



Botticelli: *Bacchus and Ariadne*, Baldini engraving.



NELLA MISCOLA STANDO VIDI FARE
TANTO RVNA FANTINA GRANDONORE
QVALE VERGINITA SI VOL SALVARE
E PERDIVINA GRASIA EZZO VALORE
DISCENDILLEI EVIENACARNARE
FIGVOLCHEFFIA DITANTO SPLENDORE
E FIE DIDDIO SVO FIGVOLVERACIE
CHE TTV T TOLZECOLHOZTRO PORRANPACIE

II. 8. a



NELLA MISCOLA STANDO VIDI FARE
TANTONVNA FANTINA GRANDE ONORE
QVALE VERGINITA SI VOL SALVARE
E PERDIVINA GRASIA E SVO VALORE
DISCENDILLEI EVIENACARNARE
FIGVOLCHEFFIA DITANTO SPLENDORE
E FIE DIDDIO SVO FIGVOLVERACIE
CHE TTV T TOLZECOLHOZTRO PORRANPACIE

C. II. 8. a

THE SIBYLS: FINE AND BROAD MANNERS
THE HELLESPOINTINE SIBYL

Baccio Baldini: *Elispontica*

all. The figure is standing as opposed to being seated, and there are no details of drapery or costume in common.

When, however, we compare the *Elispontica* Baldini engraving with another Botticelli engraving in the British Museum, his *Bacchus and Ariadne* [See illustrations opposite] the similarities are obvious and telling. In the *Bacchus and Ariadne*, we see a pageant cart and throne, apparently constructed from rustic, unshaped, thick branches and vine stems, extraordinarily like the throne on which the Hellespontine Sibyl sits in both fine and broad-manner series. The design is so bizarre and so like the Hellespontine's seat that this convincingly places the Hellespontine amongst the Sibyls taken from Italian sources, almost certainly Botticelli. This source and its implications is fully discussed below in considering the relation between these engravings and theatrical performance.

Erythraean Sibyl (C, II 5) Attribute: Erect, unsheathed sword. [See illustration overleaf] This is held in her right hand. The presence of the sword indicates that whoever wrote the original *schema* for the appearance of these Sibyls had taken particular care to consult the early Fathers, whether the source is Valturio's documentation for Rimini, or another Humanist designing these costumes. I am grateful for the meticulous research of Maricarmen Gomez for her extensive and scholarly account of the history and development of the *Ordo Sibyllarum*, published with the specialist recordings of the various music manuscripts made by Jordi Saval.¹⁷⁹ I differ from her, however, in the translation of Quodvultus's introductory remarks before Augustine's acrostic:

**Quid Sibylla vaticinando etiam de Christo clamaverit in medium
proferamus, ut ex uno ispide utrorumque frontes percutiantur, judaeorum
sollipet atque paganorum, atque suo gladio, sicut Goliath, Christi omnes**

¹⁷⁹ Maricarmen Gomez, *El canto de la Sibilla II*, (Rouen: Auvidis-Astrée, 1988 Reference E 8705), pp.16-17.



RISGUARDO IDDIO DELLO EXCELZO ABITACOLO
GLIUMILI SVOI ENASCERA NEGORNI
VTIMI DICHCO CHONQVEZTO MIRACOLO
DVNA VERGINE EBREA CONTVTTI ADORNI
CHETVMI ELZVO FIGLVOI ZANFALTRO ZTACOLO
NELLE TERRENE CHVLE ZIROGORN
NASCERA GRAMPROFEPHTA ALTO EACORTO
DIVERGIN MADRE ETQVETO ELVERO ZCORTO

C.II.5.A



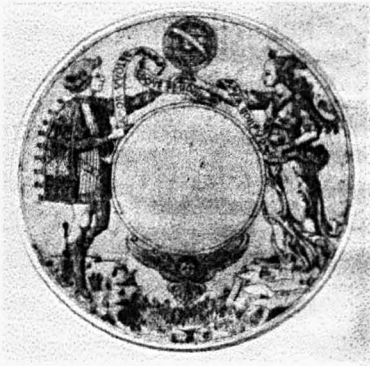
RISGUARDO IDDIO DELLO EXCELZO ABITACOLO
GLIUMILI SVOI ENASCERA NEGORNI
VTIMI DICO CHQVETO MIRACOLO
DVNA VERGINE EBREA CONTVTTI ADORNI
COSTVMI ELZVO FIGLOI SANZALTROOBTACOL
NELLE TERRENE CHVLE SISO GORNI
NASCERA GRAMPROPHETA ALTO EACORTO
DIVERGIN MADRE ETQVETO ELVERO SCORTO

C.II.5.B

THE SIBYLS: FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE ERYTHREAN SIBYL

COMPARISON OF BOTTICELLI'S ROUNDEL WITH THE BALDINI CHIMICA



.5.6



C.H. 4.6.

THE SIBYLS: FINE AND BROAD MANNERS
THE CIMMERIAN SIBYL

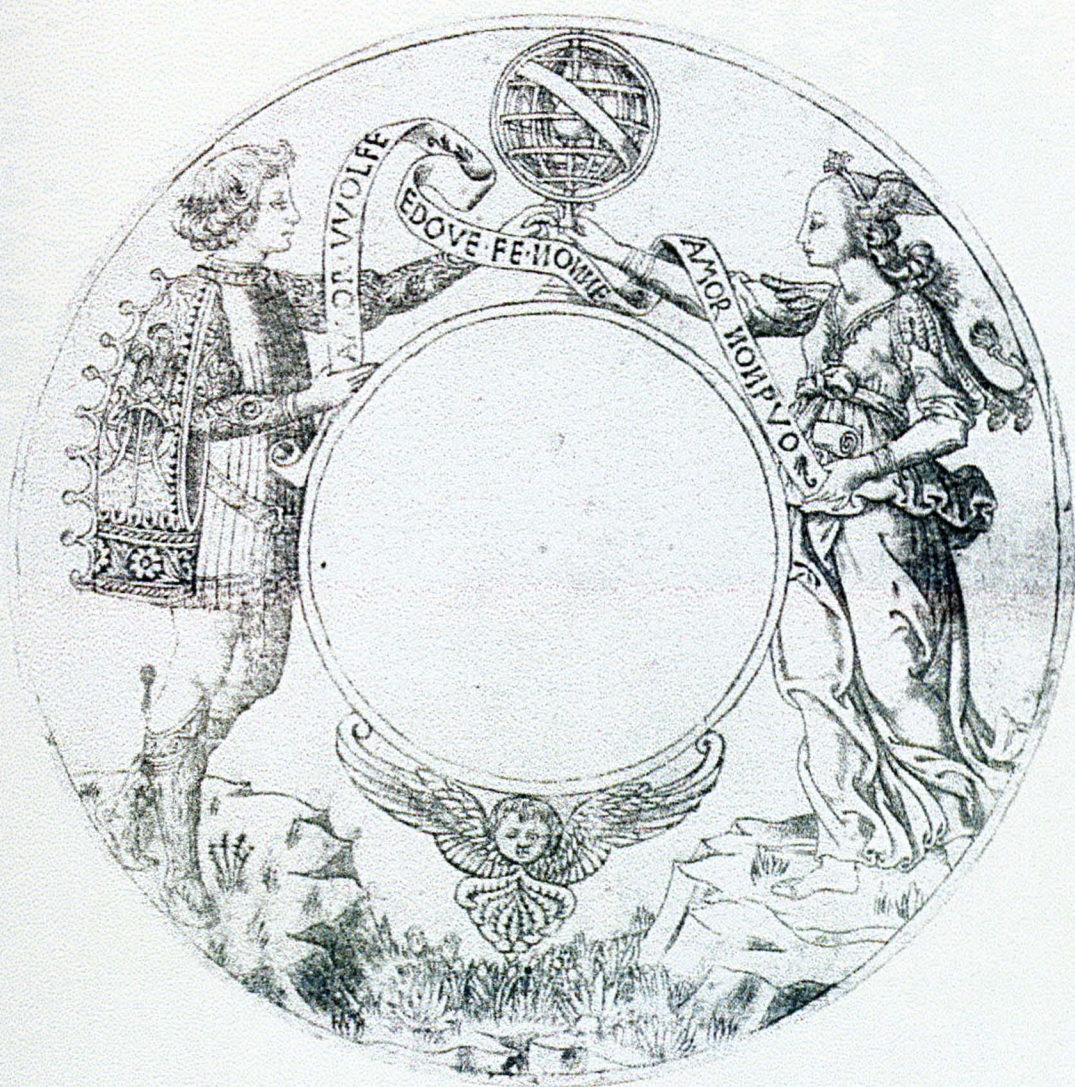
percutiantur inimici audite quid dixerit. (There follows Augustine's acrostic.)

Gomez translates this to mean Goliath's sword. The Latin is ineluctably ambiguous. I attribute the ownership of the sword to the Sibyl and if I am in error, I can only plead that my error is likely to be the same as that of the early Humanists who found this passage an indication that the sword was the attribute of the Erythraean Sibyl. I translate the passage:

Let us proclaim what the Sibyl prophesied concerning Christ, so that the foreheads of the Jews and the Pagans shall be struck with a stone and that all the enemies of Christ shall also be struck down by her sword, like Goliath. Listen to what she said.

Sibylla Chimica (C. II. 4) [See illustration opposite] has the dream-like, sleepy sense of otherworldly serenity that marks Botticelli: in my view, quite unlike the Sibylla Frigia with the awkward arm and the stiff posture. Furthermore, Sibylla Chimica has a costume detail that is very like that on another Baldini engraving that is held to be from a Botticelli drawing: that is the roundel, printed for fixing to perfume boxes and the like, illustrated here. Chimica has a winged head dress which is so like that found on the little tondo. On the tondo is printed Lorenzo de' Medici's *impresa amorosa*, '*Amor vuol fe, e dove fe nonne Amor non puo*'.¹⁸⁰ (Love wants faith, and where there is no faith, Love is powerless). This motto is found on several of the other fine-manner Florentine, so called 'Otto prints'. These are thus named because the German collector Ernst Peter Otto acquired them in 1793. They include a series of round and oblong labels for love gifts. [See illustration overleaf.] . This one is generally dated to the 1470s, the period of the Sibyls

¹⁸⁰ See Charles Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love: Botticelli's Primavera and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p.111 and Lorenzo de' Medici's canzone, '*Perché, se pur di tue bellezze spogli*'. The roundel is shown in Dempsey's figure 17.



Roundel

SOURCES



Botticelli: *Fortitude*



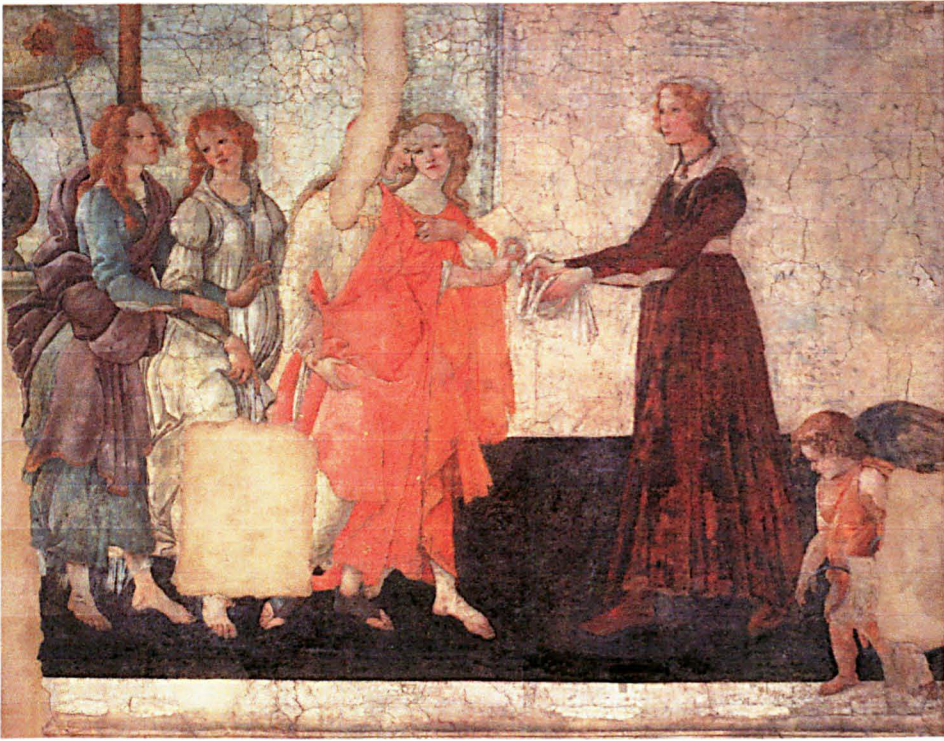
Baldini *Cumana*: The fine manner *Cumana* wears the same kind of armour bodice and fish-fin sleeves as Botticelli's *Fortitude*

engravings, and seems to relate to the contemporary love affair between Lorenzo de' Medici and Lucrezia Donato. The youth wears on his sleeve the diamond ring with feathers, Lorenzo's device. The girl is idealised. The wings on her head make her almost a female version of Mercury, the *psychopomp*, the one who transports the soul to Heaven, much the way Lorenzo speaks of her in the *Canzone*. In the Baldini engraving the words of the first line of the vernacular poem directly under the picture of the Sibylla Chimica are, *A Holy Virgin her youthfulness*. She is seated on clouds in the heavens, and with her winged head dress and is again a messenger between earth and heaven. She is bending piously over a book, in the manner of so many Virgins in Renaissance Annunciation pictures. There is a momentary ambiguity in which for an instant the picture becomes not the virgin Sibyl, but the Virgin, the subject of the Sibyl's prophecy, message and meaning become one.

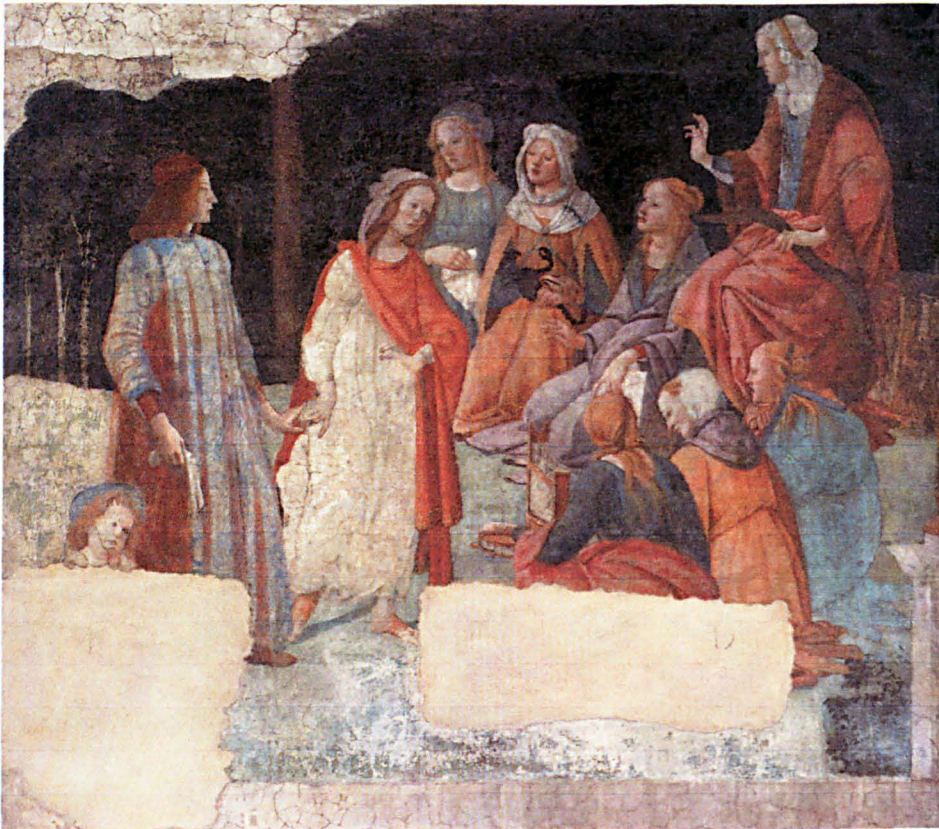
A winged head-dress is also found on a female figure, *Judith with the Head of Holophernes*, engraved by Baldini from a drawing by Finiguerra for the Picture-Chronicle. The engraving was made between 1465 and 1480. This however, is not as close to the Baldini Sibyl as is that of the roundel.

The **Sibylla Cumana** (C. II. 7) engraving is also wholly convincing as a Botticelli design. Botticelli's seated figure of *Fortitude* is the earliest work proven conclusively to be his. It was commissioned by Tomasso Soderini in 1470, as one of a series portraying the Virtues for the Florentine *Tribunale*, to be hung behind the Judge's chairs. This is the period of the Sibyls' engravings. If we compare the style and costume of the Cumana, with that of *Fortitude*, we see a striking similarity. [See picture opposite.] *Fortitude* has decorous armour over her bust and arms, with strange, fish-fin like projections at the top of the arm, just below the shoulder armour. The costume of the Cumana, although constructed in cloth, bears an embroidered design that closely echoes the armoured bodice of the *Fortitude* picture. Just like the armour, the sleeves are constructed with separate shoulder and arm components. Like armour, the shoulder sleeve has a fish scale pattern and from this suspends the fish-fin projection that echoes that on *Fortitude*.

BOTTICELLI BETROTHAL PICTURES



Betrothal fresco: Venus and the three graces present a gift to a young woman



Betrothal fresco: A youth is introduced to the seven liberal arts

It is (C. II. 12) the **Sibylla Agrippa**'s serenity and overwhelming innocence and sweetness, her unworldly serenity that makes it possible to believe that this is taken from a Botticelli design. [See picture overleaf.] It is however, difficult to find a contemporary pictorial parallel known to be by Botticelli: difficult but not impossible. In Paris in the Louvre, there is a pair of frescos transferred to canvas, probably painted for the marriage of the young man and woman depicted. [See pictures opposite] The woman immediately strikes one as a Tornabuoni, remembering the portraits of the family in Florentine frescos, although her identity is unknown. She may be Nanna Tornabuoni who married Matteo degli Albizzi in 1484. The fresco was taken from a palazzo owned by the Tornabuoni, and the companion fresco, according to nineteenth-century accounts of it when *in situ*, once bore an Albizzi coat of arms held by the little boy on the left, perhaps a younger brother of the groom. The young woman is being met by allegorical figures, perhaps Venus and the three Graces, or Chastity, Beauty and Love. In the other fresco, the young man is being led towards the seven Liberal Arts; all these figures of wisdom also personified by women, rather like the Sibyls. The dominant figure amongst these, wears a costume and veil very like that of the Sibylla Agrippa. The date is late for the Sibyl engravings, if it is that of a marriage. However, the rhetoric of the frescos seems to me to be rather that of a formal betrothal, not a marriage. The pictures are all about gaining wisdom, education to be undergone in preparation, not the imminence of a marriage. The young man looks to be about fourteen or fifteen; if so, the picture could easily belong to the 1470s.

C: German-influenced Engravings

Libyan Sibyl (C. II. 2) from the plate of *St John*. (Bartsch, vol. 8 p. 64, formerly, Vol VI (part I) in first edition. pp.23-4.) Attribute: **Garland**.

Delphian Sibyl (C. II. 3) from the plate of *St Mark*. (Bartsch, vol. 8 p. 63, formerly, Vol VI (part I) in first edition. pp.23-4.) Attribute: **Horn**.

Tiburine Sibyl (C. II. 10) from the plate of *St Matthew*. (Bartsch, vol. 8 p. 65, formerly, Vol VI (part I) in first edition. pp.23-4.) Attribute: **Distinctive Helmet**.



QUANDO SARA QUESTO SOMMO DILECTO
 IL VALENDO CHE SARA INCARNATO
 VERBO DIVINO CUSTO ZANTE PREFETTO
 IN PRIMA VENTRE MATERNO CRIATO
 DI SPIRITO SANTO ZANEA DIFETTO
 E IL VALERPO DA MOLTI DISPREGATO
 RIPRENDERA CON DOLCEZZA D'AMORE
 E REI E BVONI FIE LOR PREGIO LONORE

2.H.12.A



QUANDO SARA QUESTO SOMMO DILECTO
 IL VALENDO CHE SARA INCARNATO
 VERBO SANTO DIVINO CUSTO ET PERFETTO
 IN PRIMA VENTRE MATERNO CREATO
 DI SPIRITO SANTO SENZA ALCUNO DEFETTO
 E IL VALERPO DA MOLTI DISPREGATO
 RIPRENDERA CON DOLCEZZA D'AMORE
 E REI E BVONI FIE LOR PREGIO ET HONORE

C.H.12.B

THE SIBYLS : FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE SIBYL AGRIPPA



Siena: Sibylla Lybica

See pictures on following pages.

When comparing these Sibyls with the German plates the resemblance and influence that Hind notes is clear. However, these German influenced Sibyls are interesting because they all have very distinctive and singular attributes, which are nothing to do with the German pictorial sources. Indeed, the differences from the sources are more remarkable than the similarities which are confined to the positions of the hands and some details of drapery. The Italian additions to the German Model are as follows:

Libyan Sibyl: Attribute: the garland on her head.

The Libyan Sibyl's mistaken clothes.

We have seen the 'Chinese whisper' process through which manuscript copies of text begin to accrue errors, despite the careful work of the Scholars of the time. This process also applies to the transmission of visual images before the invention of printing. The case of the appearance of the Sibylla Lybica is evidence for this.

In several Sibyl cycles, the Libyan Sibyl is recognised by the wreath of greenery on her head.¹⁸¹ The Libyan on the floor of Siena cathedral has the garland and a tripod with snakes curled on the three legs. An early and scholarly Humanist has consulted the early Fathers, to discover the description of snakes, tripod and wreath of greenery. These three rather singular attributes, wreath, snakes and tripod, in combination cannot have got into the design by adventitious artistic fancy. They are taken from Constantine's sermon, *Ad Sanctum Coelum*, which Eusebius appended to his *Life of Constantine*, the basis of which Eusebius may actually have provided.¹⁸² [See picture opposite.]

¹⁸¹ The Illustration of the Sibilla Libica is a photograph of that Sibyl as found on the floor of Siena Cathedral. Source: Bruno Santi, *The Marble Pavement of the Cathedral of Siena*, trans. by H. Grant and C. Wasserman (Florence: Scala, 1988)

¹⁸² Harnac *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius* 3 vols 1893-1904) 1, 762, no. 24. T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* 1981, 73ff. See also Parke, p. 164-5.

Constantine writes:

It has occurred to me to mention the various evidences of Christ's divinity. The Erythraean Sibyl, who states that she was born in the sixth generation after the Flood, was a priestess of Apollo. Wearing a garland like the god whom she worshipped, and ministering the tripod round which the snake is coiled, she delivered Apolline oracles to those who enquired of her, through the foolishness of her parents who had devoted her to this service through which unseemly passions and nothing solemn arises as is shown by the legends about Daphne. She, then, within the adyton, carried away in that unreasonable superstition, and having become filled with a genuinely divine inspiration, prophesied in verse what would happen about God and clearly by the initial letters of the verses, which is called an acrostic, revealed the story of the coming of Jesus.¹⁸³

The Mediaeval and Renaissance respect for early 'authorities' must be borne in mind. The Humanist has taken enormous trouble to find out the appearance of Sibyls from authorities, perhaps taking Eusebius's imaginative account as a serious eyewitness description. However, in Eusebius's source text, these very singular attributes are ascribed to the *Erythraean Sibyl*, mistakenly perceived as a Delphic seer, the Pythia, replete with snakes, tripod and head garland, not to the Libyan Sibyl at all. The historical Pythia was, of course, never thought of as a Sibyl in the early centuries when Sibyls were active and associated with the worship of Hera, not the Delphic Apollo. The description has been misapplied first, by Eusebius to the Erythraean Sibyl. That description has been recorded by a later Humanist and then again misapplied to the Sibilla Lybica by a copyist or an artist in some stage in the development of this artistic convention, perhaps because there are snakes in Africa, and he could find no other early extended description of what a Sibyl looked like.

¹⁸³ Constantine: *Ad Sanctum Coetum* 19 (*Or. Sib.* 8. 217; 243). Barnes translation.

THE HEAD DRESS AND HAIR OF THE SIBILLA LIBICA



Rimini: note the large central flower like Siena



Baldini: Series 1 Fine Manner and Series 2 Broad Manner note the dignified plaits at the neck



Barbieri second series (1482)



Siena

Once mistakes become accepted as canonical, it is useless to point out that an error has occurred. Succeeding painters must paint what the public recognise in order to be understood. The principle we see here is that accidents and mistakes can occur in the process of transmission, however passionately the culture respects *auctoritas* and the need to preserve authenticity in text and physical appearance. When these mistakes become canonical, they come to have, however initially mistaken, an *auctoritas* of their own. The Sibylla Lybica is a very early example of adventitious but significant permanent change in the evolving genre. The wreath of greenery around her head became the attribute that permanently identified her. The literary source to which the label on the floor refers is in Euripides. [See picture opposite]

The Sibilla Libica is a pure invention of Euripides, that is, *not* a 'real' Sibyl, one who ever had a cult, or a separate existence outside Literature. Euripides mentions this Sibyl, not in a tragedy, but in his horrific satyr-play, *Busiris*, for which, so far, it is not possible to give a date. This play is the first example of a *literary*, non-historical, invention of a named locality and identity of a Sibyl, who then became adopted into the accepted canon of Sibyls. The following gives a précis of the narrative:¹⁸⁴

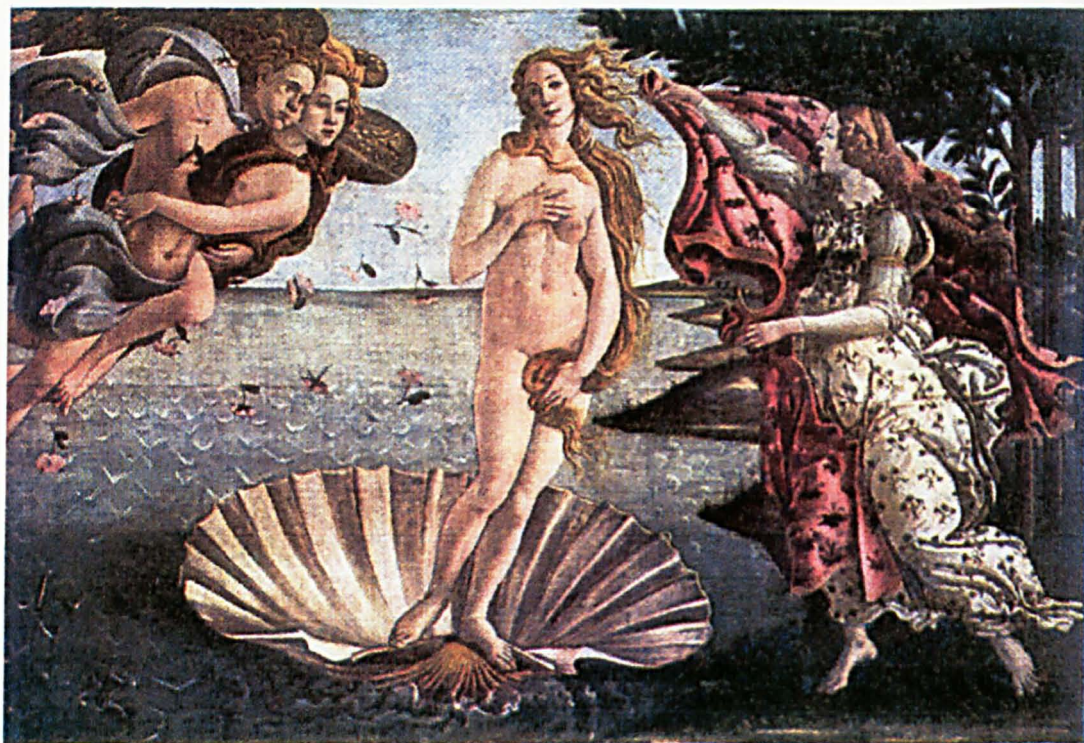
Busiris was a bastard son of Poseidon. He was a mortal King with the unwholesome habit of sacrificing all strangers and foreigners visiting his land. The prologue is spoken by Lamia, a figure in the Greek oral tradition of folk tales. She was a figure who rose from the ground in woods and glades and stole your babies. She is probably a folk memory of the old earth goddesses, the chthonic forces, dramatised by Aeschylus as Furies, worshipped in the Greek mainland with male child sacrifice, before the coming of the Helene tribes and their sky gods. Athenian mothers dreaded Lamia as she stole infants from their mothers. In the play, her first dramatic words are, *'Who does not know my name, execrated by man, - Lamia the Libyan by race?* Euripides makes her the daughter of Poseidon, the chief god of Libya

¹⁸⁴ See Parke, p. 104.

BOTTICELLI: STUDY OF VENUS AND THE BIRTH OF VENUS



Note the strange pig-tails, which tend to the ridiculous,
omitted from the major work



and therefore the half sister of Busiris. Later in the prologue, Lamia explains that she is the mother of Sibylla by Zeus.

There is no evidence of any non-literary existence of a Libyan Sibyl, nor of a connection of Lamia with Libya; that connection was made by Euripides. As Parke points out however, given the horrific nature of Lamia, as child killer, the barren desert would seem her natural element and sets the tone for the horror and savagery of the play to follow.¹⁸⁵ The function of the Sibyl in the play is to give Busiris a motive by prophesying that a foreigner would kill him. She is portrayed on the floor of Siena with the careful scholarly attribution of the source in Euripides on the label beneath her feet.

Visual Sources for the appearance of the Lybica

The appearance of the Lybica is also influenced by Rimini, the Baldini prints and Botticelli, or a print taken from a Botticelli work.¹⁸⁶ All of these appear to influence the design of her hair and head-dress.

The Lybica at Siena has surprising little plaits, dangling down inconsequentially over her shoulders. The head is covered by a veil surmounted by a flowery head wreath. At Rimini, one of the un-named Sibyls has just such a head-wreath. This wreath is present on both editions of the Baldini engravings and on the Barbieri second (1482) series. The plaits only appear on the Baldini engravings where they are rescued from the ridiculous by their being heavy and luxuriant, and coiled round the neck of the Lybica, like snakes. On the black, statuesque Sibylla Lybica at Siena, the little pig-tails combined with the rather solid wreath hover dangerously near the edge of the risible. They are far better handled in the Baldini prints. [See the Botticelli opposite and the comparative prints on the following page.] But where did the generally unoriginal Baldini get the idea of adding the plaits? The answer may again be a design by Botticelli seen in Florence in the Bottega in which they

¹⁸⁵ See Parke, p. 105

¹⁸⁶ See Appendix 9.

SOURCES



Meister E.S. *St John* though to be a source for Baldini's *Libica*.

Note the position of the arm on the book in the fine manner Sibyl engraving. There is a reverse image on the Baldini engraving because of the process of copying and printing.



SOURCES



Meister ES *St Mark* thought to be a source for Baldini's first series *Delphica*



C.H.3.a



C.H.3.b

THE SIBYL: FINE AND BROAD MANNERS
 THE DELPHIAN SYBIL

both worked. It is a preliminary sketch for the *Birth of Venus*. The pose is exactly that which is found in the major painting, but there, the pigtails are removed. Some may feel it fortunate that Aphrodite's hair in the great work is left free to play in the breeze bearing her to shore, after her birth from foam and light. Pig-tails do nothing for dignity or the intimation of the sublime.

Delphic Sibyl: Attribute: Horn. All Sibyls in other cycles holding a Horn are named as the Delphic Sibyl or are un-named. The first appearance of the Sibyl with a horn is at Rimini, where the lettering on the Scrolls was never finished and none have been named. The appearance of the horn on this engraving is chronologically the next after Rimini. The attribution of the horn to the Delphic may imply that the overall designer, the humanist who would have described the attire and oracles for the series, may have had sight of the written plans and instructions for the sculptured Sibyls at Rimini. This seems possible since several of the attributes found on the engravings make their first appearance there but without attendant names. No subsequent series challenges the attributions, which implies that no Humanist designer at the time had reason to question such attribution. I have not yet been able to find a classical source for the attribution of the Horn to the Sibyl at Delphi. [See picture opposite]

The Tiburtine Sibyl: Attribute: Distinctive Helmet. The very distinctive Helmet does not appear at Rimini (1454-55). The first Sibyl with such a helmet is the Tiburtine of this series. I believe I have found a source in the Florentine undated but early engraving in the Saray Museum, Istanbul. It is by an anonymous Florentine artist and is entitled, *El Gran Turko*.¹⁸⁷ The Tiburtine Sibyl's headgear can be seen as an amalgam of the Turk's headdress and the two Finiguerra drawings discussed above in relation to the Frigian Sibyl's odd helmet. This Helmet also appears on the Sibylla Tiburtina at Siena where it is so similar to

¹⁸⁷ It is illustrated in David Landau and Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print 1470-1550* (New Haven London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 97 and is reproduced after p. 185.

SOURCES



Meister E S *St Matthew* thought to be a source for Baldini's *Tiburtina*
Compare the hand on the book with the fine manner Tiburtina



C.11.10.3



C.11.10.8

THE SIBYL: FINE AND BROAD HANDERS
 THE TIBURTINE SIBYL

this engraving as to make one certain that these engravings were a design source there. [See picture opposite and after page 185]

COMPARISON OF THE TEXT OF THE ENGRAVINGS WITH THE TEXT OF BELCARI'S PLAY, *THE ANNUNCIATION*

Almost all authorities opine that these prints were produced for a published version of Feo Belcari's dramatised presentation, the *Annunciation*. This was performed before the Medicis in Florence in 1471. The identity of some of the vernacular eight-line verses in the play and the poems on the engravings was noted. It was therefore assumed that the play influenced the engravings, indeed, that the engravings were produced for a printed edition of the play. Previous literary scholarship however, had been unaware of the surprising uniformity of Sibylline oracles in painted fresco cycles since a much earlier date, implying the existence of a common canonical text. It is much more likely that both play and engravings were based on that common source text, than that the production of the engravings had anything directly to do with the play.

There are nine Sibyls in Belcari's play. Six of them belong to the canonical list (i.e. the Varronian list with the two additional Sibyls: Europa and Agrippa). The other three are feminised versions of male Hebrew prophets and the sources from which their dramatic speech poems are taken, are therefore Biblical. Prophets and 'Sibyls' appear in the play in the following order, each invited to make a speech by the Annunciation Angel, presumably Gabriel:

Noah; Jacob; Sibilla Erythraea

Moses; Joshua; Sibilla Sofonia (feminised Prophet Zephaniah)

Samuel; David; Sibilla Persica

Elijah; Elisha; Sibilla Hellespontica

Malachi; Amos; Sibilla Samia

Isaiah; Jonah; Sibilla Michèa (feminised Prophet Micah)

Jeremiah; Ezekiel; Sibilla Osea (feminised Prophet Hosea)

Daniel; Habakkuk; Sibilla Cumana

Haggai; Abdias; Sibilla Tiburtina

Nahum; Joel; Zechariah.

Of the six canonical Sibyls that appear in the play, only three have speeches that are used on the Baldini engravings: The Erythraea, the Persica and the Samia. Only Erythraea and the Persica have poems that agree with the canonical text. The Samia, in play and engravings speaks a vernacular poem based on the canonical oracle of the Libica. It is far more likely that Belcari was employed by the printer to write the octets under Baldini's popular series of engravings and that he used three octets from his play, than that the engravings were intended to illustrate his play. Three could simply have been pirated from the play to save time and effort. As to the rest, the textual differences are so great as to show that the series could never have been made to illustrate the play.

TEXTUAL CONTENT OF THE ENGRAVINGS

Each engraving has three textual elements: the Sibyl's name; the Latin oracle, most often a rendering of the canonical Orsini oracle and lastly, a vernacular poem, apparently intended as a meditation in Italian on the content of the Latin oracle. I have only given the first, fine-manner version of the Latin oracles on the engravings, since the two versions vary merely in small details of spelling. There are two main areas of interest related to the text on these engravings: firstly, the preservation or transmutation of the Latin canonical text and secondly, the relationship of the vernacular poems to the printed Latin text. In the following transcriptions, the English translations are my own.



ECCHO PERCHVI LABESTIA CHONCHVLCHATA
 SARA EFIA CONCEPTO ELIR GOCHONDO
 ELGRENBO DELLA VERGINE BEATA
 SALUTE FIA DELLA GENTE DEL MONDO
 SARANNO EPEDI SVODIQUESTA NATA
 FORTESSA DAZOSTENERE OGNI PONDO
 VANTICINARE VNA PAROLA BASTA
 XPO GEZV NASCERA DELLA CHACTA

II. I. a



ECCO PERCVI LABESTIA CHONCHVLCHATA
 SARA EFIA CONCEPTO ELIR GOCHONDO
 ELGRENBO DELLA VERGINE BEATA
 SALUTE FIA DELLA GENTE DEL MONDO
 SARANNO EPEDI SVODIQUESTA NATA
 FORTEZA ASOSTENERE ONGNIGRANPO
 VATICINARE VNA PAROLA BASTA
 XPO IESV NASCERA DELLACASTA

C. II. I. b

THE SIBYLS : FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE PERSIAN SIBYL

THE PERSIAN SIBYL

AGE

In both fine and broad manner she is portrayed as a young attractive woman.

DRESS

Fine Manner: This is a French influenced costume design with tight body lacing and a henin.

Broad Manner: The whole costume design is changed to the natural loosely draped Italian mode. A cap is substituted for the stiff henin, with a garland of flowers. The hair is allowed to flow freely down the back.

ATTRIBUTES

Neither print has any attributes apart from the conventional Sibylline Book.

TEXT

Latin Oracle:

**Ecce filius dei belluam equitans dominus universi cuius quias gentium
salutis in virgine erit et fiet nobis hoc verbum palpabile.**

*Behold the Son of God, riding the back of the Beast, universal God, the
salvation of these his people, carried by the Virgin, and object of our faith, this
Word made flesh.*

This can be compared to the canonical Persian Sibyl's oracle in the Orsini Palace, (1434), recorded in the Tongerlo and Olomouc manuscripts. Neither contains the last phrase but the Revello MS. has the words: *Verbum palpabile*, (The Word made flesh) added at the end. [See picture opposite]

Tongerlo MS:

**Ecce bestia conculcaberis et gignetur Dominus in orbe terrarum et
gremium virginis erit salus gentium et pedes eius in valitudine hominum.¹⁸⁸**

Olomouc MS:

**Ecce bestia conculcaberis et gignetur Dominus in orbem et gremium
virginis erit salus gentium et pedes eius in valitudinem hominum.**

The Revello Play manuscript, printed c. 1491:

**Ecce bestia conculcaberis et gignetur dominus in orbem terrarum. / Et gremium
virginis erit salus gentium et pedes eius in valitudine hominum. Invisible
verbum palpabitur.**

*Behold, He will tread down the beast, and be begotten Lord of all the kingdoms
of the world in the lap of a Virgin. He will be the Saviour of mankind and his
feet bring the health of mankind. The invisible Word will be made palpable
flesh.*

Vernacular Verse:

Fine-manner Version.

ECCHO PER CHUI LA BESTIA

CHONCHULCHATA

SARA E SIA CONCEPTO EL SIR

GOCHONDO

EL GRENBO DELLA VERGINE BEATA

SALUTE SIA DELLA GENTE DEL

MONDO

Broad-manner Version

ECCHO PER CHUI LA BESTIA

CHONCHULCHATA

SARA E SIA CONCEPTO EL SIR

GOCONDO

EL GRENBO DELLA VERGINE BEATA

SALUTE SIA DELLA GENTE DEL

MONDO

¹⁸⁸ From this point on, the reader is directed to the relevant Appendices 3, 4, and 5 for Latin translations.

NATA

FORTEZZA DA SOSTENERE OGNI

PONDO

VANTICINARE UNA PAROLA BASTA

XRISTO GESU NASCERA DELLA

CHASTA

NATA

FORTEZA A SOSTENERE OGNI GRAN

PONDO

VATICINARE UNA PAROLA BASTA

CHRISTO IESU NASCERA DELLA

CASTA.

Behold him, by whom the Beast will be crushed.

He will come into being and be conceived, the Lord of Joy.

The lap of the Blessed Virgin

Is the health of the people of this world.

It will be his feet, born of her,

(That will have) the strength to bear every (great) burden.

To prophecy, one name is enough:

Christ Jesus, born of the Chaste One.

SIBILLA LIBICA



ECCE VENIENTEM DIEM
ET LATENTIA APERIEN
TEM TENEBIT GREMI
O GENTIVM REGINA

IDI VERRA CHEL'ETTERNO SIGNORE
LUME DARA ALLE CHOZE NAZCHOZE
ELEGAMI ISCORA DELNOSTRI EPPORE
PARA LESINAGOGGE LUMINOZE
ESOLVERA LELAB ALPECHATORE
EFIE STADERA DITVTE LECHOZE
ENGRENBO ALLA RINA DELLE GIENTEVA
SEDRA QVETTO RE ZANTO EVIVENTE

C.II.2,A

SIBYLLA LIBI
CA



ECCE VENIENTEM DIEM
ET LATENTIA APERIEN
TEM TENEBIT GREMIO
GENTIVM REGINA

IDI VERRA CHEL'ETTERNO SIGNORE
LUME DARA ALLE COSE NAS COSE
ELEGAMI ISCORA DELNOSTRO ERRORE
PARA LESINAGOGGE LUMINOS E
ESOLVERA LELABRA ALPECHATORE
EFIE STADERA DITVTE LECHOSE
ENGRENBO ALLA REINA DELLE GENTE
SEDRA QVETTO RESANTO EVIVENTE

C.II.2,B

THE SIBYLS: FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE LIBYAN SIBYL

THE LIBYAN SIBYL

AGE

Fine Manner: A woman in her thirties.

Broad Manner: A young woman.

DRESS

There is little difference in clothing between the two engravings. The remarkable features are the platted hair and the garland. Again a connection with Botticelli is established. [See picture opposite]

ATTRIBUTES

Both Fine and Broad manner display the head wreath.

TEXT

Latin Oracle:

Ecce venientem diem et latentia aperientem tenebit gremio gentium Regina.

Behold the coming day when that which is hidden shall be revealed, held in the lap of the Queen of all mankind.

For reasons of space on the engraving, this is an extremely contracted version of the three main ideas of the canonical Orsini text. It is obvious that the writer of the vernacular poem had before him the whole of the Latin canonical source text.

Tongerlo MS.:

**Ecce veniet dies et illuminabit dominus condensa tenebrarum et solventur
nexus synagoge et desinent labia hominum et vedebunt regem vivencium et
tenebit illum in gremio virgo domina gencium et regnabit in misericordia et
uterus matris eus erit statera cunctorum,**¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ Passages where the Latin varies between manuscripts are emboldened.

Revello MS.:

Ecce veniet dies et illuminabit dominus condempsa (sic) tenebrarum, / et solvetur nexus synagoge. / Et desinent labia hominum et videbunt regem viventium. Et tenebit illum in gremio virgo domina gentium / et regnabit in misericordia / et uterus matris eius erit statera cunctorum. (sic)

Behold! The day will come when God will pierce the dense gloom with light and break the bond, Oh Synagogue, and the lips of men shall be shut and they will see the living King. He will be held in a virgin's lap, the Queen of all mankind and he will reign in mercy and his mother's womb shall be the measure (literally, 'balance' or 'yoke-pole') of all things.

Baldini Vernacular Verse:

IL DI VERRA CIEL L'ETTERNO

SIGNIORE

LUME DARA ALLE CHOSE

NASCHOSE

E LEGAMI ISCORÀ DEL NOSTRI

EPPORE

FARA LE SINAGOGHE LUMINOSE

E SOLVERA LE LAB AL

PECHATORE

E SIE STADERA DI TUTE LE

CHOSE

EN GRENBO ALLA RINA DELLE

GIENTE

SEDRA QUESTO RE SANTO E

VIVENTE.

IL DI VERRA CIEL L'ETTERNO

SIGNIORE

LUME DARA ALLE COSE NASCOSE

E LEGAMI ISCORÀ DEL NOSTRO

ERRORE

FARA LE SINAGOGHE LUMINOSE

E SOLVERA LE LABRA AL

PECHATORE

E SIE STADERA DI TUTE LE CHOSE

EN GRENBO ALLA REINA DELLE

GIENTE

SEDRA QUESTO RE SANTO E

VIVENTE.

The day will come when the Eternal Lord

Will give light to hidden things

And break the bonds of our sin.

He will make the synagogues shine

And loose the lips of sinners

He will be the measure of all things;

On the lap of the Queen of nations

This King will sit both Holy and a living mortal.

The poet here has knowledge of the whole of the canonical oracle, not just the shorter version engraved on the print.



NONE DA ER LENTA MATRA VILLA
 AVERTALO PERA ECHONZIDERARE
 DOVE PROFETA GRANDE AIN CHARNARE
 LAVENIMENTO CHE ALTA VILLA
 NEL VENTRE VIRGINAL DUMANAN CILLA
 ZANEA CONGIUNTO DVOM MORTALZAFARE
 ECCHOTALCHOZA FIE SOPRA NATVRA
 FATTA PER CHVEL CHE PVO CHE INIO DARA

C.II.3,A



NONE DA ER LENTA MATRA VILLA
 HAVENDO VNTANTO EFFECTO ACONTENPIARE
 ACMPENSANDO EL COR IETOSFAVILLA
 NILGRAN PROFETA ELQVL DE BBE INCARNARE
 NEL VENTRE VIRGINAL DIHMANAANCILLA
 SENZA CONGIUNTO DVOMO MORTALZAFARE
 ECCOTALCOZA FIA SOPRA NATVRA
 FACTAPERQUEI CHELVNIVERSOHA INCVRA

C.II.3,B

THE SIBYLS: FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE DELPHIAN SIBYL

THE DELPHIC SIBYL

AGE

She is a young woman in both prints. [See picture opposite]

DRESS

The costume and appearance varies little in the two prints. Baldini's source is probably the plate of *St Mark*. (Bartsch, vol. 8 p. 63, formerly, Vol VI (part I) in first edition. pp.23-4.)

ATTRIBUTES

Horn.

TEXT

Latin Oracle:

Nascetur propheta e Virgine absque humana corruptione.

He will be born a prophet from a Virgin without human corruption.

(This appears to be a more seemly rendering of the rather downright assertion of the Orsini text. It is a rephrasing.)

Tongerlo MS.:

"Nasci debere prophetam absque maris coitu de virgine eius."

Revello MS:

Nascetur propheta absque matris coytu ex virgine eius.

I have been born to be a prophet from a virgin conceiving without coitus with her husband.

Baldini Vernacular Verse:

Fine-manner Version:

NON E DA ESSER LENTA MA
TRANQUILLA

AVERTA L'OPERA E CHONSIDERARE

DOV EL PROFETA GRANDE A
INCHARNARE

L'AVENIMENTO CHE ALTA VILLA

NEL VENTRE VERGINAL D'UMAN
ANCILLA

SANZA CONGIUNTO D'UOM
MORTAL SA FARE

ECCHO TAL CHOSA SIE SOPRA
NATURA

FATTA PER CHUEL CHE PUO CHE I(L)
DIO DARA.

It need not be slow but calm

The open work is to consider

*Where the great prophet has
taken flesh,*

The event that his great estate is

Broad-manner Version:

NON E DA ESSER LENTA MA
TRANQUILLA

HAVENDO UN TANTO EFFECTO A
CONTENPLARE

A CUI PENSANDO EL COR LIETO SEA
VILLA

NEL GRAN PROPHIETA EL QUI DEBBE
INCARNARI

NEL VENTRE VIRGINAL DI HUMANA
ANCILLA

SENZA CONGIUNTO D'UOMO
MOPTAL SA FARE

ECCO TAL COSA SIE SOPRA NATURA

FACTA PER QUEI CHE L'UNIVERSO
HA IN CURA.

It need not be slow but calm

*Having a great effect to
contemplate*

*Thinking of this, the heart is
light, its dwelling place*

*in the great prophet he who
must be incarnate*

*In the virginal womb of a
mortal maid*

*Without relations with a human
man.*

*Lo! These things are above
Nature*

*Made for those who can bear
what God
will give.*

*In the virginal womb of a
mortal maid*

*Without relations with a human
man.*

*Lo! These things are above
Nature*

*Made for those whom the
universal*

God has in his care.



VNA VERGINE SANTA INVERITIA
CHOLLA SVA FACCIA GLORIOSA EBELLA
NOTRIRA RE DELLET TERNA MILITIA
EBER DELLAT TE SVO GLIDARA QVELLA
PERLA CHVI SIVEDRA LALTA LETITIA
SOPRA AVITTORIALE LAZANTA IZTELLA
EZARA VICITATA DACHOLORO
CHEGLIOFFERRANNO INCLENZO MIRA EORO

4, A



VNA VERGINE SANTA INVERITIA
CHOLLA SVA FACCIA GLORIOSA EBELLA
NVTRIRA EIREDELLET ERNA MILITIA
ETBER DELLACTE SVO GLIDARA OVELLA
PERLVI SOL SIVEDRA LALTA LETITIA
PERLVIRIS PLEN DERALANVOVA STELLA
ETSARA VICITATA DACHOLORO
CHEGLIOFFERRANNO INC ENSO MIRRA ET ORO

C.II.4, B.

THE SIBYLS: FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE CIMMERIAN SIBYL

THE CIMMERIAN SIBYL: SIBYLLA CHIMICA

AGE

A young serene and beautiful girl in both prints.

DRESS

The prints hardly vary and she is dressed in the Italian mode. [See picture opposite]

ATTRIBUTES

Winged head-dress

TEXT

Latin Oracle:

In pueritia sua cum facie pulcherrima puerum nutrit suo lacte, id est lacte celitus misso.

In her girlhood with her most beautiful face, her milk nourishes her son. That is milk sent from Heaven.

This is a much abbreviated précis of the last part of the canonical text, no doubt for reasons of space on the engraving. The vernacular poem, makes it obvious that the canonical text is being used, since it refers to far more of it than the Latin tag.

Olomouc MS.:

**In p'ma facie virginis ascendit puella quaedam necans gladiis: vastans gentes
Egypti et ex pulcra facie. Prolixa capillis sedés super sedem strata[?m] nutrit
puerum dan[s/t] ei [?s] ad comedendum lac proprium.**

*In the first appearance of the Virgin, this maiden ascends killing with swords:
laying waste the people of Egypt with her beautiful glance. With an abundance
of hair, sitting upon a couch, she nourishes her son, giving him his own milk.*

Revello MS.:

In prima facie virginis ascendet puella facie pulcra, capillis prolissa, sedens
super sedem stratam puerum nutriens, dans ei ad comedendum ius proprium,
idest lac de cello missum.

*In the first appearance of the Virgin, this maiden ascends, with a beautiful face,
an abundance of hair, sitting upon a couch, she nourishes her son, giving him
with pleasure, his own drink, that is giving the milk of Heaven*

(Note that the reference to swords and killing the people of Egypt with her
beautiful glance is entirely absent from the Revello manuscript)

Vernacular Verse:

UNA VERGINE SANTA IN PUERIZIA	UNA VERGINE SANCTA IN PUERITIA
CHOLLA SUA FACCIA GRORIOSA E	CHOLLA SUA FACCIA <u>GL</u> ORIOSA E
BELLA	BELLA
NOTRIRA RE DELL' ETTERNA	<u>N</u> UTRIRA <u>EL</u> RE DELL' ETTERNA
MILIZIA	MILIT <u>I</u> A
E BER DEL LATTE SUO GLI DARA	<u>E</u> T BER DEL LA <u>C</u> TE SUO GLI DARA
QUELLA	<u>O</u> VELLA
PER LA CHUI SI VEDRA L'ALTA	PER <u>LUI SOL</u> SI VEDRA L'ALTA
LETIZIA	LETIT <u>I</u> A
SOPRA AVITTORIALE LA SANTE	PER LUI RISPLENDERA LA NOVA
ISTELLA	STELLA
E SARA VICITATA DA CHOLORO	<u>E</u> T SARA VICITATA DA CHOLORO
CHE GLI OFFERRANNO INCENSO	CHE GLI OFFERRANNO IN <u>C</u> ENSO
MIRA E ORO.	MIR <u>R</u> A <u>E</u> T ORO.

A holy virgin in youth

*With her glorious and beautiful
face*

*Will nourish the King of the
eternal Host,*

*It is a drink of her milk she will
give, she*

*Through whom one will see the
highest joy*

*Over whom the holy star will
shine*

And he will be visited by those

*Who will offer him incense,
myrrh and gold.*

A holy virgin in youth

*With her glorious and beautiful
face*

*Will nourish the King of the
eternal Host,*

*It is a drink of her milk she will
give, where*

Through him alone *one will
see the highest joy*

For him will shine the new star

And he will be visited by those

*Who will offer him incense,
myrrh and gold.*



RISGVARDO IDDIO DELLO EXCELZO ABITACOLO
GLIUMILI SVOI ENASCERA NEGORNI
VTIMI DICHO CHONSVEZTO MIRACOLO
DVNA VERGINE EBREA CONTVTTI ADORNI
CHETVMI ELZVO FIGLVOL ZANALTRO ZTACOLO
NELLE TERRENE CHVLE ZIOGORN
NASCERA GRANPROFETA ALTO EACORTO
DIVERGIN MADRE ET QVETTO ELVERO ZCORTO

C.II.5,A



RISGVARDO IDDIO DELLO EXCELZO ABITACOLO
GLIUMILI SVOI ENASCERA NEGORNI
VTIMI DICO CHOQVETTO MIRACOLO
DVNA VERGINE EBREA CONTVTTI ADORNI
COSTVMI ELSVO FIGLOL SANZALTROOB STACOL
NELLE TERRENE CHVLE SISO GORNI
NASCERA GRANPROFETA ALTO EACORTO
DIVERGIN MADRE ETQVETTO ELVERO SCORTO

C.II.5,B

THE SIBYLS : FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE ERYTHREAN SIBYL

THE ERYTHREAN SIBYL

AGE

Fine Manner: About forty.

Broad Manner: A young woman. [See picture opposite]

DRESS AND ATTRIBUTES

A Sword is held like the figure of Justice and in the fine-manner engraving there is a black veil and nun's attire. These are adopted almost exactly by later frescos. The Erythraea at the Casa Cavassa, Saluzzo, (1507), is an almost exact copy of this engraving. At Rimini Sibyl 2 (my numbering), holds a small knife in her right hand, rather like a flaying knife, but there is no recognisable nun-like habit in this previous cycle. In the Broad-manner engraving the black veil is removed and the Latin oracle is placed on the Sibylline book.

TEXT

Latin Oracle:

**Morte morietur tribus diebus somno suscepto et mo(x) ab infe(r)is egresu
ad luce(m) veniet primus.** (Source: Lactantius, Div. Inst. IV 297-8.)

This Latin tag bears no relationship to the appropriate canonical oracle for the Erythraean Sibyl, nor does it relate to this or any other vernacular poem in the Baldini series. The vernacular poem printed below the picture does however, clearly refer to the appropriate, canonical Latin oracle for the Erythraean Sibyl, that of almost every other Italian Sibyl Cycle.

**'De excelso celorum Habitaculo prospexit Deus humiles suos, et nascetur in
diebus novissimis de virgine hebrea in cunabulis terre.'**

*From the high habitation of Heaven, God has looked down on his humble
(people) and a son shall be born in these latest days of a Hebrew Virgin in the
cradle of the Earth.*

In these engravings however, it appears in the mouth of the Hellespontine Sibyl (See below). There is a mismatch here between the Latin oracle and the vernacular poem. The poem refers to the traditional, canonical oracle, **not** the oracle (perhaps mistakenly) printed above it.

Le Clercq, on the basis of having seen the Tongerlo and Liège manuscripts, asserts that there are two Latin oracles attached to the Erythraea therein¹⁹⁰. It is possible that what appears on the scroll here is the alternative oracle. However, we must remember that it is most unlikely that the Erythraea on the Orsini wall had two oracles, when all the others, with the apparent exception of the Samian according to these manuscripts, have only one.

The Latin inscription appearing on the Baldini Erythraean scroll is a paraphrase of that found at Rimini (1454-55) on the scrolls of Sibyls 9 and 10 and subsequently at Siena (1481-82), which, like Rimini takes its oracles from Lactantius rather than the conventional Canonical list.¹⁹¹

Rimini:

**Et tunc ab inferis regressus ad lucem veniet primus resurrectionis principio
revocatis ostenso.**

*Then, having returned from Hell, he shall be the first to come to the light,
showing the beginning of Resurrection. (Lactantius: Div. Inst. IV.19 p. 298.)*

Siena: the Cimmerian Sibyl:

**Et mortis fatum fini et trium dierum somno suscepto; tunc a mortuis
recessus in lucem venier, primum resurrectionis initium ostendens.**

¹⁹⁰ See De Clercq, 'pp. 106-7. At the time of writing the monks of Tongerlo and the Liege Bibliotheque have not responded to requests or correspondence about the manuscripts and, despite all efforts, I have not yet been able to gain access.

¹⁹¹ My numbering, see *supra*, Rimini entry.

I suspect that the designer of the engravings had before him not only the canonical text from which most of the other Sibyls' Latin tags are taken, but also the source text for the Rimini Sibyls (probably Valturio's). Having sight of two source texts, a mistake was made. Thus it is possible that this was an alternative tag for the preceding Sibilla Chimica / Cimmeria from the Rimini / Siena source text.

The Humanist designer of the Baldini engravings appears to have made the same mistake as regards the attribute of this Sibyl, also confusing it with the previous Sibylla Chimica on his alternative Rimini / Siena source text. This figure of the Erythraea carries a sword. There is nothing in the canonical oracle for the Erythraea that mentions a sword. However, the full version of the previous Sibilla Chimica's oracle refers to her carrying a sword. What seems to have happened here is that a picture of the Sibilla Chimica, along with her Latin tag from the Rimini Siena source list, has had the name (Eritea) applied to it. It would actually be more appropriate to swap the two drawings. The sword-bearing Sibyl would then be the Sibilla Chimica whose full canonical Latin oracle refers to a sword. The picture of the Sibilla Eritrea whose quotation is about looking down from heaven, would then be the Sibyl with the winged hat, seated on clouds, markedly looking down from the sky, a far more suitable illustration.

The existing Sibilla Eritrea does however, sit above a circular band of stars, reminiscent of the diagrammatic representation of the spheres of the Ptolemaic universe, where the region of the *Primum Mobile* or First Cause, is above the Sphere of the Fixed Stars. This accords with the canonical text and her vernacular poem, 'God looked down from his home on High on his humble (servants)'. However, again, an attribute appears related to a poem that has nothing to do with the Latin inscription on her scroll.

The vernacular poems can be compared with the canonical Orsini oracle for the Erythraean Sibyl, as recorded in the Olomouc MS., which is clearly the source of the vernacular poem, is as follows:

**De excelso celorum habitaculo prospexit dominus humiles suos et nascetur
in diebus novissimis di virgine Hebraica filius incunabulis terre.**

(N. B. with the exception of the word filius, this is exactly the inscription that appears
on the floor of Siena Duomo in the mouth of the Sibilla Erythraea.)

*From the high habitation of Heaven, God has looked down on his humble
(servants) and a son shall be born in these latest days of a Hebrew Virgin in the
cradle of the Earth.*

Vernacular Verse:

Fine-manner Version:

RISGUARDO IDDIO DELLO EXCELSE
ABITACOLO

GLI UMILI SUOI E NASCERA NE
GORN

ULTIMI DICHO CHON QUESTO
MIRACOLO

D'UNA VERGINE EBREA CON TUTTI
ADORN

CHOSTUMI EL SUO FIGLUOL SANZ
ALTRO STACOLO

NELLE TERRENE CHULLE SI
SOGIORN

NASCERA GRAM PROFEPHITA ALTO E
ACORTO

DI VERGIN MADRE ET QUESTO E 'L
VERO SCORTO.

Broad-manner Version:

RISGUARDO IDDIO DELLO EXCELSE
ABITACOLO

GLI UMILI SUOI E NASCERA NE
GORN

ULTIMI DICO CHON QUESTO
MIRACOLO

D'UNA VERGINE EBREA CON TUTTI
ADORN

COSTUMI EL SUO FIGLIOI. SANZ
ALTRO OBSTACOLO

NELLE TERRENE CHULLE SI
SOGIORN

NASCERA GRAN PROPHETA ALTO E
ACORTO

DI VERGIN MADRE ET QUESTO E 'L
VERO SCORTO.

God looks down from his home on high at

His humble people and will be born in the

Last days, I say, by this miracle:

Of a Hebrew Virgin

adorned with beautiful

Attire; her Son, without hindrance,

Stays in the earthly cradle.

The great prophet, high and courtly, born

Of a virgin mother, and this is the revealed truth.

Comparison with the ERITREA poem in the Belcari *Annunciation*:

Risguarda Dio, eccelso abitacolo,

Gli umili suoi, e nascerà ne' giorni

Ultimi, dico, con questo miracolo,

D'una Vergine Dbrea, con tutti adorni

Costumi, il suo figliuol; senz'altro ostacolo

Nelle terrene culle si soggiorni;

Avrà in terra il Profeta, senza coito

Di madre, da una vergine il suo introito.

Note that the first four and a half lines and the sixth line correspond to the canonical oracle of the Erythraean:

**De excelso celorum habitaculo prospexit dominus humiles suos. Et nascetur
in diebus. novissimis di virgine hebraica filius incunabulis terrae.**

The last two lines of the play speech correspond to the canonical Delphica oracle: **Nascetur propheta absque matris coitu ex virgine eius.** In the engraving however, the poet has composed alternative lines, presumably to preserve these lines for use in the Delphic Oracle engraving. Belcari is free, in the play, to incorporate the canonical Delphic Oracle in the Erythraea's speech because he is not intending to put the Sibylla Delphica on the stage, substituting a feminised Hebrew prophet. The inclusion of this Oracle however, demonstrates that he is writing the play with the Latin canonical list before him as a source.

The poem from the play and the engraved poem strike one as very similar indeed. The lines that do not come from either canonical texts and are composed by the writer are virtually identical so the author is likely to be the same. That does not however, imply that all the poems on the engravings are taken from the play: they are not. It does however, raise the question, because of similarities in style and tone, as to whether it were Belcari who wrote some other poems for the Baldini engravings.



OECHO CHEPRESTO NEVERRA QVELDIE
CHE LYCERA LETENEBRE SERRATE
ESCOGLERAZZI NODI E PROFETIE
DELLAGRAN SINAGHOGA RILASCATE
SARAN LELABBRA DELLE GENTE PIE
VEDRAZZI ERE DIVENTI E PALPATE
ELVENIR SVO INGRENO AVERGINVERA
CHE COSI MOSTRA EL CIELO E OGNI PERA

C.II.6,A



E CHO CHEPRESTO NEVERRA QVELDIE
CHE LYCERA LETENEBRE SERRATE
ESCOGLERASSI NODI E PROFETIE
DELLAGRAN SINAGHOGA RILASCATE
SARAN LELABBRA DELLE GENTE PIE
VEDRASSI ERE DEVENTI E PALPATE
ELVENIR SVO INGRENO AVERGINVERA
CHE COSI MOSTRA EL CIELO E OGNI PERA

C.II.6,B

THE SIBYLS : FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE SAMIAN SIBYL

THE SAMIAN SIBYL

AGE

In both engravings she is an aristocratic young woman in high fashion. [See picture opposite]

DRESS

Fine and broad-manner engravings are almost identical except that the text has been improved on the second series. The costume is French or Burgundian in style with a *henin* and veil. The material is a rich imported damask, shining as though silk.

ATTRIBUTES

In both engravings she has a sword at her feet. This normally is the attribute of the Erythraean Sibyl. The reason for its presence is unknown to me. It is not directly mentioned in the text but there is an unpleasant anti-Semitic flavour to it, and it alludes to the sermon of Quodvultus, which looks forward to the final judgement of the Jews. Seen in this light the sword may represent Justice.

TEXT

Latin Oracle:

Ecce veniet dives et e paupere nascetur et bellue adorabunt.

*Behold, he who is rich will come to be born of a poor woman, and the wild
beasts shall adore him.*

This is a shortened paraphrase of the canonical Samian Oracle as it appeared on the Orsini Fresco.

Tongerlo MS.:

**Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de paupercula et bestie terrarum adorabunt
eum clamabunt et dicent laudate eum in astris celorum.**

Behold, he who is rich will come to be born of a poor woman, and the wild beasts of all lands shall adore him and shall cry aloud, and say, 'Praise him to the starry Heavens'.

The strange thing is that, just like the previous Sibyl, the vernacular poem is not a meditation on this tag, '**Ecce veniet diyes...**' but is without a doubt is a meditation on the canonical oracle of the Sibylla **Lybica**, which is:

Ecce veniet dies et illuminabit dominus condempsa (sic) tenebrarum, / et solvetur nexus synagoge. / Et desinent labia hominum et videbunt regem viventium. Et tenebit illum in gremio virgo domina gentium / et regnabit in misericordia / et uterus matris eius erit statera cunctorum. (sic) (Revello MS.)

Behold! The day will come when God will pierce the dense gloom with light and break the bond, Oh Synagogue, and the lips of men shall be shut and they will see the living King, dwelling in a virgin's womb who is the Queen of all mankind and he will reign in mercy and his mother's womb shall be the measure (literally, 'balance' or 'yoke-pole') of all things.

A poem based on this oracle has already appeared in this series, correctly placed on the engraving of the Lybica.

It is as though a canonical list has been given to different vernacular versifiers, instructed to take various of the Latin oracles, identified by the first few words of each oracle, and render them into Italian verse for patrons who have no Latin. (Surely, if all the oracles were versified by the same man, he would notice that he had already written a poem based on, '**Ecce veniet dies**'.) Here the wording is, **Ecce veniet diyes**', and thus the mistake has occurred. The doubts that these engravings are closely connected to Belcari's *Annunciation* seem further justified by this mistake.

This kind of mistake is wholly understandable in the context of the culture for which the engravings were produced, where two languages, Italian and Latin, were used, and where many citizens were not literate in either, and some only in one. The artisan engravers were

not necessarily literate at all, as witness the failures in letter formation and word boundaries. The artist / designers may not have been literate either, or not literate in Latin, so the wrong pictures may be appended to the words, as in the case of the likely Cimmerian / Erythraean swap. The Humanist who wrote the original canonical or Rimini / Siena collection of oracles is not likely to have been concerned directly with these engravings, but rather a second scholar, using the ready-made compilation of oracles and distributing them to versifiers, designers and engravers alike.

The process of production is most likely to have been that an artist, owner of a *bottega* selling pictures and prints, had occasion to make a series of Sibyl engravings, perhaps based on a drama, or perhaps simply based on the fascinating series of Sibyls and Prophets decoratively adorning the walls of churches. The advent of the comparatively cheap print meant that ordinary people could, for the first time, afford to adorn the walls of their houses with pictures. Cycles of Prophets and Sibyls in churches traditionally have Latin oracles placed beside them. For the domestic market, amongst those who were literate at all, there was a greater number who were literate in Italian than those who had Latin. It therefore made commercial sense to add attractively rhythmic Italian verse to the canonical Latin. Two sources of oracles were used: the Rimini / Siena source and the canonical Orsini source. If such a mistake were made in matching poem to Latin text, the engraver would be unlikely to spot it. The iconography is equally confused; the Samia too is given a sword like the figure of Justice, for good measure. It lies beneath her feet and is not noticeable. It may refer to breaking the chains of the synagogue, but there is nothing in either Latin or vernacular that really shows its relevance. It is as though the designer simply did, 'another Sibyl' basing his designs on the previous one in the series and mistakenly assuming that all Sibyls had swords as an attribute.

Vernacular Verse:

Fine-manner Version:

O ECHO CHE PRESTO NE VERRA
QUELL DIE

CHE LUCERA LE TENEBRE SERRATE

E SCOGLERASSI NODI E PROFEZIE

DELLA GRAS SINAGHOGHA.

RILASCATE

SARAN LE LABBRA DELLE GENTE

PIE

VEDRASSI E RÈ DI VIVENTI E

PALPATE

EL VENIR SUO IN GRENBO A VERGIN

VERA

CHE COSÌ MOSTRA EL CIELO E OGNI

SPERA.

Oh, see! That day is soon to come

*That will illuminate the thick
shadows*

*And scatter the fetters and
prophecies*

Of the gross Synagogue.

Broad-manner Version.

ETCHIO CHE PRESTO NE VERRA QUELL
DIE

CHE LUCERA LE TENEBRE SERRATE

E SCOGLERASSI NODI E PROFETIE

DELLA GRAN SINAGHOGHA.

RILASCATE

SARAN LE LABBRA DELLE GENTE

PIE

VEDRASSI E RÈ DI VIVENTI E

PALPATE

EL VENIR SUO IN GRENBO A VERGIN

VERA

CHE COSÌ MOSTRA EL CIELO E OGNI

SPERA.

*"Of the **great** Synagogue"¹⁹²*

¹⁹² This is the only line which has a difference in meaning.

*The lips of the pious people will be
released,*

*They will see the King of the
living, and tangible*

*Is his advent in the lap of a true
virgin,*

*Thus he displays Heaven and
every human hope.*



LVTIMO MI PARLAR FIE SIVERACE
 PERO CHE GIUNTI SONGIUNTI CANTI
 DEL VENIMENTO E DEL RE DI PACIE
 DI CHICCI SALVERA NOI TUTTI QUANTI
 E PRENDERA CARNE HUMANA SIGLI PIACIE
 E MO' TERRAZZI VMILAT TUTTI CHVANTI
 PER MADRE PRENDE VMIL VERGINELLA
 E CHVAL SARA SOPROGNI DONNA BELLA

C. II. 7, a



LVTIMO MI PARLAR FIE SIVERACE
 PERO CHE GIUNTI SONGIUNTI CANTI
 DEL VENIMENTO DI QUEL RE CHE IN PACE
 VENENDO EGUSTI PORRA TUTTI I QUANTI
 IN CARNE HUMANA SI COME AI PIACIE
 HUMIL FIANTUTTI ES VO' EFFETTI SANCTI
 PER MADRE PRENDE VMIL VERGINELLA
 E AQUAL SARA SOPROGNI DONNA BELLA

C. II. 7, b

THE SIBYLS: FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE CUMAEAN SIBYL

THE CUMAEAN SIBYL

AGE

Both engravings are of young girls. [See picture opposite]

DRESS

Fine Manner: She wears what appears to be an extravagant drama or masque costume with an armour-like bodice with fish-fin upper sleeves and scales. She has a rather French looking high fashion hair style, reminiscent of that of the Europa, who also sports fish-scale sleeves.

Broad Manner: There is recourse to a conventional Italian mode.

ATTRIBUTES

In neither engraving are there distinctive attributes.

TEXT

Latin Oracle:

Iam redit et virgo redeunt saturnia regna

Iam nova progenies cello demittitur alto.

(Virgil: *Eclogues* IV, 6-7)

Edinburgh MS.:

**Ultima cumei venit iam carminis aetas magnus qui abintegro seclorum
nascitur Ordo. Iam reditet virgo redeunt saturnia regna. Iam nova
progenies caelo dimittitur alto.**

*Now the last period of Cumaean song has come which is born from the
beginning of a new age. Now the Virgin returns, the Kingdoms of Saturn return.*

A new progeny is sent down from high Heaven.

N.B. This is the same oracle as that which is on Siena floor in the mouth of this Sibyl,
save for minor differences in spelling.

Vernacular verse:

Fine-manner Version:

L'UTIMO MIE PARLAR SIE SI
VERACIE

PERO CHE GIUNTI SON GLI UTIMI
CANTI

DEL VENIMENTO DELLO RE DI PACIE

DICHICCI SALVERA NOI TUTTI
QUANTI

E PRENDERA CARN UMANA SI GLI
PIACIE

E MOSTERRASSI UMIL A TTUTTI
CHUANTI

PER MADRE PRENDE L'UMIL
VERGINELLA

LA CHUAL SARA SOPR' OGNI
DONNA BELLA

Broad-manner Version:

L'UTIMO MIO PARLAR SIA SI
VERACIE

PERO CHE GIUNTI SON GLI UTIMI
CANTI

DEL VENIMENTO DI QUELL RE CHIE
IN PACE

VENENDO E GUSTI PORRA TUTTI
QUANTI

EN CARNE HUMANA SI COME A LUI
PIACE

HUMIL SIA IN TUTTI E SUO EFFECTI
SANCTI

PER MADRE PRENDE L'UMIL
VERGINELLA

LA QUAL SARA SOPR' OGNI DONNA
BELLA..

My last word, will be so true

*Because the last songs have
come*

*(Telling) of the advent of the
King of Peace*

*Of the advent of that King who
in peace*

*Saying that he will save every
one of us in*

*That he will take human flesh,
as he pleases,*

*And will show himself, humble,
to all of us.*

*For his mother he will take the
humble little virgin,*

*Who will be beautiful above all
women.*

*is coming, and will render
everyone justified,*

*In human flesh as is pleasing to
him*

*He will be humble in all things
and his holy works*



NELLA MIESCOLA STANDO VIDI FARE
TANTO IVNA FANTINA GRANDONORE
QVALE NVRGINITA SI VOL SALVA
E PER DIVINA GRACIA E SVO VALORE
DISCENDE ILLE EVIENE A CARNARE
FIGLI VOLCHEFFIA DI TANTO SPLENDORE
EFFIE DIDDIO SVO FIGLI VOLVERACIE
CHE TTV TTV TOLZECOL NOSTRO PORRAN PACIE

II.8,A



NELLA MIESCOLA STANDO VIDI FARE
TANTO NVNA FANTINA GRANDONORE
QVALE TVRGINITA SI VOL SALVARE
E PER DIVINA GRATIA E SVO VALORE
DISCENDE ILLE EVIENE A CARNARE
FIGLI VOLCHEFFIA DI TANTO SPLENDORE
EFFIE DIDDIO SVO FIGLI VOLVERACIE
CHE TTV TTV TOLZECOL NOSTRO PORRAN PAC

C.II.8,B

THE SIBYLS: FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE HELLESPONTINE SIBYL

THE HELLESPONTINE SIBYL

AGE

Fine Manner: Late middle-aged.

Broad Manner: Young. [See picture opposite]

DRESS

The dress varies little in the two engravings. It is the loose wide-sleeved Italian mode.

The distinctive feature is the turban with the ligature under the chin.

ATTRIBUTES

The Turban with the ligature under the chin.

TEXT

Latin Oracle:

**Ex eccelso habitaculo respexit Deus humiles et in terris novissimis diebus
ex hebrea virgine nascetur.**

*From his habitation in Heaven, God looks again at the humble (servants) on the
earth. He shall be born in these latest days of a Hebrew Virgin.*

Again we see what appears to be a mistake in engraving: the wrong Latin text is on the scroll of this Sibyl. This is the canonical text of the Sibylla 'Eritea' not the 'Elispontica'. These names may be more easily muddled by an illiterate artisan than, for example, 'Eritea' and 'Agrippa'.

Canonical Text:

**Erythraea: De excelsa celorum habitaculo prospexit Deus humiles suos, / et
nascetur in diebus novissimis de virgine hebrea in cunabulis terre. (Revellio
MS.)**

*From the high habitation in Heaven, God has looked down on his humble
(servants) and a son shall be born in these latest days of a Hebrew Virgin in the
cradle of the Earth.*

It clearly and without a doubt, belongs to the picture and vernacular poem of the Eritea in this series, whose vernacular poem begins:

RISGUARDO IDDIO DELLA EXCELSE ABITACOLO

GLI UMILI SUOI E CASCERA NE GORNI

ULTIMI DICHO CHON QUESTO MIRACOLO

D'UNA VERGINE EBREA

God looks down from his home on high at

His humble people and will be born in the

Last days, I say, by this miracle:

Of a Hebrew Virgin

This Latin oracle is attributed to the Erithraea not the Hellespontica in all frescos, until after the 1470s when these engravings were circulated, after which some attribute it to the Hellespontica. These 'mistaken' attributions are found in the cycles at Saluzzo, 1507, Tivoli, early 1500s and Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome, 1509, all of which attribute this oracle to the Hellespontica. The normal, canonical (Orsini / Olomouc) text for the Sibilla Elispontica is given below.

There would probably be two written lists of inscriptions: one of the Latin labels and the other of the vernacular poems to be inscribed below the pictures. This allows mistakes to occur, especially if the engraver is a fine artist but not very literate, as seems to be the case here, judging from the state of the lettering and word boundaries. This series of engravings, may have been the source of confusion and departure from the canonical text in relation to the Hellespontine Sibyl in later painted fresco Cycles. Certainly, as we shall see, the costume

design influenced fresco painters in parts of Italy distant from Florence, so it is rational to assume that the Baldini erroneous attribution of text was also transmitted.

The expected, canonical text for this Sibyl as encountered on the Orsini wall, the preserved canonical list of oracles at Revello and almost all the frescos, is the following:

Olomouc MS. describing the Orsini inscriptions:

Hellespontica: Ihesus Christus nascetur de Casta.

Hellespontica: Jesus Christ born of the Pure One.

The vernacular poem here is clearly a meditation on the canonical Latin tag above, not the one mistakenly printed on this engraving. All the other scrolls held by Sibyls that bear the Latin inscription, have a single line of print, filling the whole of the visible space on the scroll, which is designed to be the appropriate length to contain the oracle. Here, the print is squeezed into one section only, in two rows with the last syllable jammed underneath.

Baldini’s Vernacular Verse:

Broad-manner Version:

NELLA MIESCOLA STANDO VIDI
FARE

TANTO ‘N UNA FANTINA GRAND
ONORE

QUALE ‘N VERGINITA SI VUOL
SALVAI

E PER DIVINA GRAZIA E SSUO
VALORE

DISCENDI LEI E VIEN A
‘NCARNARE*

FIGLUOL CHE SSIA DI TANTO
SPLENDORE

Fine-manner Version:

NELLA MIESCOLA STANDO VIDI
FARE

TANTO ‘N UNA FANTINA GRANDE
ONORE

QUALE IN VERGINITA SI VUOL
SALVARE

E PER DIVINA GRATIA E SUO
VALORE

DISCENDE IN LEI E VIENE
INCARNARE*

FIGLUOLO CHE SIA DI TANTO
SPLENDORE

E SSIE DI DDIO SUO FIGLUOL

VERACIE

CHE.TTUTTO 'L SECOL NOSTRO

PORRA 'N PACIE.

E SIE DI DDIO SUO FIGLUOIO

VERACIE

CHE.TTUTTO EL SECOL NOSTRO

PORRAI IN PACE

Standing in the humble cottage, I have seen

All things vested in a little infant. Great honour

To him who wishes to preserve virginity

And by Divine grace and his valour,

He descends and becomes incarnate,

A Son who will be of great splendour

And will be a true Son of his God

Who will establish peace for all of our age

* This section is to be understood by looking carefully at the two versions of the engraving. There are no significant differences in the meaning of the two versions. However, a comparison of the two forms of line 5* gives us an interesting sidelight on the frustrations of the writer in seeing his poem put into print, rendered by an illiterate engraver.

The writer or proof-reader has submitted corrections of the mistakes in the first version of line 5, by scoring through the erroneous letter and putting the correct letter before it, only to find that both correct letter and erroneous letter are engraved on the second 'correct' edition.

An example is the change in line 5 from, 'DISCENDI LEI', to, 'DISCENDE I(N) LEI', which makes no sense, having a redundant, 'in'. We see that the writer has left an instruction, 'E' and a crossed out 'I', meaning, " 'e' not 'i' ", but the engraver has read this as an instruction to put 'e' at the end of the word, 'DISCENDE' and follow it with the contracted form of, 'in', 'Î'. A similar process can be seen at work further along the line, where another redundant contracted 'in' appears.



VIDI LECCELSO IDIO CHE FRAGELLARE
AVE DISPOSTO LAGENTE OSTINATA
NEL SECOL NOSTRO CHE CIERTO MI PARE
SI POSSA DIR PELLE FATTE PECCATA
ONDA DISPOSTO SVO FIGL VOL MANDARE
I VIRGINE PER VOCE ANVNCIATA
PELLA SVA VMILTA SARA PO SATO
E QVESTA FIECAGION TORVIEL PECHATO

C.II.9,A



VIDI LO EXCELSO IDIO CHE FRAGELLARE
HAVE A DISPOSTO LAGENTE OTINATA
NEL SECOL NOSTRO CHE CIERTO MI PARE
SI POSSA DIR PELLE FATTE PECCATA
ONDA DISPOSTO SVO FIGL VOL MANDARE
I VIRGINE PER VOCE ANVNCIATA
PELLA SVA VMILTA SARA PO SATO
E QVESTA FIECAGION TORVIEL PECHATO

C.II.9,B

THE SIBYLS : FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE PHRYGIAN SIBYL

THE PHRYGIAN SIBYL

AGE

Fine Manner: Middle aged.

Broad Manner: Young. [See picture opposite]

DRESS

Fine Manner: The costume here is singular. She wears a sleeveless gown and has her hair loose over her shoulders like one of the Sibyls at Rimini. On her head she wears a turban surmounted by a strange helmet, rather military in aspect. She wears sandals reminiscent of those worn by Greek hoplites. She has the appearance of an Amazon. Presumably the garb is meant to suggest her remote place of origin.

Broad Manner: As in so many other broad-manner engravings the costume is made far more conventional. The sandals and helmet are removed, leaving the fashionable turban. The dress is demurely sleeved.

ATTRIBUTES

Other than the outlandish garb in the fine-manner engraving there are no special attributes.

TEXT

Latin Oracle:

**Veniet desuper filius dei et firmabitur in cello consilium et virgo
annunciabitur.**

*The Son of God will come from on high in the Court of Heaven and a Virgin
will be proclaimed.*

Canonical Orsini Version:

Tongerlo MS:

**Flagellabit deus potentes terre ex olimpo excelsus veniet et firmabitur
concilium in celo et annunciabitur virgo in vallibus desertorum.**

*Almighty God shall chastise the kings of the earth. From highest Heaven he will
come, the Court of Heaven will judge and a virgin will be proclaimed in the
desert valleys.*

Vernacular verse:

Fine-manner Version:

VIDI L' ECCEL^{SO} IDIO CHE
FRAGELLARE

AVE DISPOSTO LA GENTE OSTINATA

NEL SECOLO NOSTRO CHE CIERTO
MI PARE

SI POSSA DIR PELLE FATTE PECCATA
¹⁹³

ONDA DISPOSTO SUO FIGLUOL
MANDARE

I' VIRGINE PER VOCIE ANUNZIATA

PELLA SUA UMILTA SARA POSATO

E QUESTA SIE CAGION TORVI EL
PECHATO.

*I saw the Highest God who, to chastise,
has put down the haughty.*

Broad-manner Version:

VIDI I^O EX^{CE}LSO ID^{DI}O CHE
FRAGELLARE

HAVEA DISPOSTO LA GENTE
OSTINATA

NEL SECO^L NOSTRO CHE CIERTO MI
PARE

SI POSSA DIR PELLE FATTE PECCATA

ONDA DISPOSTO SUO FIGLUOL
MANDARE

IN VIRGINE PER VO^{CE} ANUN^TIATA

PE^{PL}A SUA UMILTA SARA POSATO

E QUESTA SIE CAGION TORVI EL
PECHIATO.

¹⁹³ (pelle = per le)

In our Age it seems certain to me.

One can say this: because of those sins already committed

Therefore, he was disposed to send his son

And has proclaimed it aloud to a Virgin.

Because of his humility he will dwell here

And that will be the time that sin will be taken away.



IL GUSTO DDIO AL TAL MESTIER MARE DATA
CHIVABBI COLMIE DIRMANIESTATO
DVNA VERGINE CHEFFIE NVNCEIATA
ENAZARETTE PERLEI ABITATO
EN BETTALEM ZARA MANIFESTATO
LACARNE DOVE DIO FIE HVMANATO
EBEN ZARA LA ZVA MARE FILICIE
CHEDITAL FIGLO ZI ZARA PNOTRICIE

C.II.10,A



EL GUSTO ID DIO ATAL ME STIER MA DATA
CHIVABBI COLMIO DIREMANIESTATO
DVNA VERGINE CHEFFIE ANNUNTIATA
ENAZARETTE PERLEI ABITATO
ET VIVA IN BETHELEM SARA MONSTRATA
LACARNE DOVE DIO FIE HVMANATO
ET BEN SARALA SVMA DRE FELICIE
CHEDITAL FIGLO ALI HOR SARANNVCE

C.II.10,B

THE SIBYLS : FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE TIBURTINE SIBYL

THE TIBURTINE SIBYL

AGE

A young woman in both engravings. [See picture opposite]

DRESS

Fine Manner: As well as the singular helmet, the Tiburtina sports a boar's skin round her neck and over her shoulders. The helmet and boar skin can be seen on the Tiburtine at Siena and the helmet at Saluzzo showing clearly that these engravings were used as source material.

Broad Manner: As in several of the Sibyl engravings the broad-manner version is stripped of interesting and singular detail, except for a stilted version of the helmet. What we have here is a conventional figure in a gown and cloak in the Italian mode.

ATTRIBUTES

Fine Manner: Distinctive Helmet. The very distinctive helmet does not appear at Rimini (1454-55). The first Sibyl with such a helmet is the Tiburtine of this series. I believe I have found a source in the Florentine undated but early engraving in the Saray Museum, Istanbul. It is by an anonymous Florentine artist and is entitled, *El Gran Turko*.¹⁹⁴ [See picture on following page.] The Tiburtine Sibyl's headgear can be seen as an amalgam of the Turk's headdress and the two Finiguerra drawings discussed above in relation to the Frigian Sibyl's odd helmet. This Helmet also appears on the Sibylla Tiburtina at Siena where it is so similar to this engraving as to make one certain that these engravings were a design source there.

¹⁹⁴ See page 149, footnote ¹⁸⁷ for description of its possible source.



Anonymous Florentine artist: *'El Gran Turko'*

TEXT

Latin Oracle:

Nascetur in bettelem in nazaret annuntiabitur regnante quieto tauro. ¹⁹⁵

He will be born in Bethlehem, and will be proclaimed in Nazareth, the peaceful bull reigning.

(An Italian prophecy of the thirteenth century speaks of a peaceful bull. This was sometimes understood as Augustus.)

Edinburgh MS.:

Nascetur christus in bethleem: et annuntiabitur in nazareth regnante tauro
pacifico fundatore quietis o foelix illa mater cuius ubera illum lactabunt.

Christ shall be born in Bethlehem and he shall be announced in Nazareth, the peaceful Taurus, founder of rest, being in the ascendant. Oh happy mother whose breast shall suckle him.

Vernacular Verse:

Broad-manner Version:

IL GUSTO DDIO AL TTAL MESTIER
M'A DATO

CHI VABBI COL MIE DIR
MANIFESTATO

D'UNA VERGINE CHE SSIE
NUNZIATA

E NAZARETTE PER LEI ABITATA

EN BETTALEM SARA MANIFESTATO

Fine-manner Version:

IL GUSTO IDDIO A TAL MESTIER M'A
DATO

CHI VABBI COL MIO DIRE
MANIFESTATO

D'UNA VERGINE CHE SSIE
ANNUNTIATA

E NAZARETTE PER LEI ABITATO

ET VIVA IN BETTELEM SARA

¹⁹⁵ 'annuntiabatur' corrected to 'annuntiabitur' in the broad manner.

MONSTRATA

LA CARNE DOVE DIO SIE
HUMANATO

E BEN SARA LA SUA MARE FILICIE

CHE DI TAL FIGLO SI SARA PER
NOTRICIE

*The just God has given me that
ability*

*Which is to show through my
words*

*How it would be announced to
a Virgin.*

*It will be Nazareth that will be
her home*

*In Bethlehem will be made
manifest*

*That flesh wherewith God will
become human*

*And all shall be well for his
happy mother*

*Who shall be the one who feeds
that same son.*

LA CARNE DOVE DIO SIE
HUMANATO

ET BEN SARA LA SUA MADRE
FELICIE

CHE DI TAL FIGLO ALIOR SARA
NUTRICIE.

*And will live in Bethlehem
where will be made manifest*

It is clear that whoever wrote the vernacular poem was aware of the full canonical Orsini version of the Latin oracle, since the poem incorporates the idea of Our Lady nourishing her Son.

VENIET COLLE ET MONTEZ. TRANZIENZ ET INPA
 YPERTATE. REGNANZ EVM SILENTIO DOMINABE
 ITVS ET E IVRGINIZ VAZE EXLIET

SIBILLA EVROPA



VERA QVEL VERRA ETERNO INMACVIATO
 EDEIVERGINE VASO VSCIRA FORA
 PERCHVI ICHOLLI EMONTI FIA PASSATO
 CHOSI LASONMITA DOLINPO ANCHORA
 ZOTTO GRAN POVERTA NELMONDO NATO
 ZINGHIOREGIANDO CHONSILENZIO OMNIHORA
 CHOSI CREDO ECCHONFEZZO ECHONORCHIO
 VERO FIGLIVOL DIDDIO EDVOMO EDDIO

C.II.11.A



VERA QVEL VERBO ETERNO INMACVIATO
 EDEIVERGINE VASO VSCIRA FORA
 PERCHVI ICHOLLI EMONTI FIA PASSATO
 CHOSI LASONMITA DOLINPO ANCHORA
 SOTTO GRAN POVERTA NELMONDONATO
 SIGNOREGGIANDO CHONSILENZIO OGNIHORA
 CHOSI CREDO ECCHONFEZZO ECHONORCHIO
 VERO FIGLIVOL DIDDIO EDVOMO EDDIO

C.II.11.B

THE SIBYLS: FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE EUROPEAN SIBYL

THE EUROPA SIBYL

AGE

In both engravings she is young and attractive. [See picture opposite]

DRESS

Fine Manner: French or Burgundian style.

Broad Manner: The costume is changed to Italian loose-flowing gown and cloak.

ATTRIBUTES

Fine Manner: An absurd double pony-tail top-knot, fashionable at the time.

Broad Manner: The hair is altered to a more natural flowing style. The changes that have been made echo those made between the fine and broad-manner prints of the Persica, indeed the broad-manner versions are very similar.

TEXT

Latin Oracle:

**Veniet colles et montes transiens et in paupertate regnans eum silentio
dominabitur et e i virginis vase exiliet.**

*He will come, crossing valleys and mountains, reigning in poverty, he,
governing silently, sprung forth from the Virgin vessel.*

Tongerlo MS. :

**Veniet ille et transibit colles et montes et latices olimpi, regnabit in
paupertate et dominabitur in silencio at egredietur de utero virginis.**

*He will come and will traverse valleys, mountains and the waters of heaven. He
will rule in poverty, governing silently, being born of a virgin's womb.*

Vernacular verses:

Fine-manner version:

VERRA QUEL VERBO ETTERNO
IMMACULATO

E DEL VERGINE VASO USCIRA FORA

PER CHUI I CHOLLI E MONTI SIA
PASSATO

CHOSI LA SONMITA D' OLINPO
ANCHORA

SOTTO GRAN POVERTA NEL MONDO
NATO

SIGNIO REGIANDO CHON SILENZIO
OMNIORA

CHOSI Credo e cchonfesso e
chonoschio

VERO FIGLIUOL DI DDIO ED UOMO E
DDIO.

Broad-manner Version

VERRA QUEL VERBO ETTERNO
IMMACULATE

E DEL VERGINE VASO USCIRA FORA

PER CHUI I CHOLLI E MONTI SIA
PASSATO

CHOSI LA SONMITA D' OLINPO
ANCHORA

SOTTO GRAN POVERTA NEL MONDO
NATO

SENIO REGGIANDO CHON SILENTIO
OGNIORA¹⁹⁶

CHOSI Credo e cchionfesso e
chonoschio

VERO FIGLIUOL DI DDIO ED UOMO E
DDIO.

It is true that the Eternal Immaculate Word

From the Virgin vessel will issue forth

By whom the valleys and mountains will be traversed

As also the summit of Olympus.

Under great poverty he is born into the world,

¹⁹⁶ Erroneous correction. The 'g' has been doubled, not the 'r'. An accurate reading is 'senior regiando'.

Ruling in silence every all the while.

This I believe, I confess and I know

He is the true Son of God, both man and God.

Again, it is clear that whoever wrote the vernacular verse had before him the whole of the canonical Latin oracle, since the poem refers to Mount Olympus and that is excluded from the Latin on the engraving, presumably in order to save space.



QVANDO SARA QUESTO SOMMO DILECTO
 ILQVALE TENDO CHE SARA IN CARNATO
 VERBO DIVINO CVSTO ZANTE PERFETTO
 IN PRIMA VENTRE MATERNO CRIATO
 DI SPIRITO SANTO SANS ALCUNO DEFETTO
 E ILQVALE PO DA MOLTI DISPREGIATO
 RIPRENDERA CON DOLCEZZA D'AMORE
 E REI E BVONI FIELOR PREGIO E L'ONORE

2.11.12,A



QVANDO SARA QUESTO SOMMO DILECTO
 ILQVALE TENDO CHE SARA IN CARNATO
 VERBO SANCTO DIVINO CVSTO ET PERFETTO
 IN PRIMA VENTRE MATERNO CRIATO
 DI SPIRITO SANCTO SENZA ALCUNO DEFETTO
 E ILQVALE PO DA MOLTI DISPREGIATO
 RIPRENDERA CON DOLCEZZA D'AMORE
 E REI E BVONI FIELOR PREGIO E L'ONORE

C.11.12,B

THE SIBYLS : FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE SIBYL AGRIPPA

THE SIBYL AGRIPPA

AGE

A young girl in both engravings. [See picture opposite]

DRESS

Both engravings are very similar. The gown and cloak are in the Italian mode

ATTRIBUTES

There are no special attributes in either engraving.

TEXT

Latin Oracle:

Hoc verbum invisibile tangi et permittet et tanquam radices germinabit.

This invisible word I have touched and he allows it, as he will spring from the root.

Tongerlo MS.:

Indivisible verbum palpabitur et germinabit ut radix et siccabitur ut folium et non apparebit venustas eius et circumdabit illum alvus maternus et flebit deus leticia sempiterna et ab himinibus conculcabitur et nascetur ex matre ut deus et conversabitur ut peccator.

Note: all other manuscripts giving an account of the oracle of this Sibyl give, *Invisibile*, 'invisible,' for this word and the likelihood is that this is correct and that *Indivisible* is a scribal error in what is otherwise likely to be the fullest and most accurate version.

The in(di)visible word will be made flesh and though he will spring as from the root, he will be withered like a leaf and will not appear beautiful. His mother's womb will confine Him. God, the eternal joy, will weep, despised of men. He will be born from his mother as God, that the sinner may be converted.

Baldini's Vernacular Verses:

QU^UND^O SARA QUESTO SOMMO
DILE^TTO

IL QUAL ENTENDO CHE SSARA
NCHARNATO

VERBO DIVIN GUSTO SANTE
PREFETTO

IN PRIMA VENTRE MATERNO
CRIATO

DI SPIRTO SANTO SANZA DIFETTO

EL QUAL SIE PO DA MOLTI
DISPREGATO

RIPRENDERA CON DOCIEZZA
D'AMORE

EREI E BUONI SIE LOR PREGIO E
ONORE.

QU^AND^O SARA QUESTO SOMMO
DILE^CT^O

IL QUAL ENTENDO CHE SSARA
INCHARNATO

VERBO SANCTO DIVIN GUSTO ET
PREFETTO

IN PRIA NEL VENTRE MATERNO
CRE^EATO

*DI SPIRTO SAN^CT^O SENZA
ALCUNO DEFECTO

EL QUAL SIA PO DA MOLTI
DISPREGI^ATO

RIPRENDERA CON DO^CE^ZZA
D'AMORE

EREI E A BUON SIA PREGIO ET
IONORE.

*When this supreme love will come
into being*

I hear that it will be the incarnate

Word, divine, just, holy, perfect

*At first from his mother's womb
created*

By the Holy Spirit without defect

**By the Holy Spirit
without any defect*

EARLY COPIES OF THE BALDINI ENGRAVINGS



No impression of the Cimmerian is known.

Who will be scorned by many

*He will reprove with the sweetness of
love*

*He will be the praise and honour of
the guilty and the good.*

[See picture opposite and on the following pages for early copies of the fine-manner engravings]

EARLY COPIES OF THE BALDINI ENGRAVINGS



EARLY COPIES OF THE BALDINI ENGRAVINGS



VINILECCELZO IDIO CHE FRAGELLARE
 AVE DI 2 POZTO LAGENTE OZTINATA
 NELZEC HOLNOZT ROCHECIERTO MI PARE
 21 PS 22A DIR PELLE FAT TE PECCATA
 ONDE DI 2 POZTO 2 VO FIGLI VOL MANDARE
 I VIRGINE PER VO CIE ANVNEIATA
 PELLA 2 VAVMILTA 2ARA POZATO
 EIVE 2 TAIEGAGION TORVI EL PECHATO



VERRAPVELVERBOETTERNOINMACVLATO
 EDELVERGINEVAZO VZCIRA FORA
 PERCHVICHIO LUEMONTI FIA PAZZATO
 CHOSILLA ZONMITADOUNPOANCHORA
 2OTTTO GRANPOVERTANELMONDONATO
 2IGNIOREGIANDO CHONZILENFOONNIORA
 CHOSICREDO ECCHONFE 22O ECHONOSCHIO
 VERO FIGLIULO DIDINO ELVOMO EDDIO



BARBIERI WOODCUTS



First and Second Series: Sibillae Agrippa and Phrygia

1481: FILIPPO BARBIERI'S WOODCUTS

At the end of 1481, one of the most widely circulated versions of a Latin work by the Sicilian Dominican, Filippo Barbieri was published. It was a little seventy-page booklet, published in quarto. The editions of this work are very numerous.¹⁹⁷

The first edition was printed in Rome by Philip De Lignamine, dated 1 December 1481, *Tractatus ... de discordantia inter Eusebium, Hieronimum et Aurelium Augustinum*. A second edition, published soon afterwards, c.1482, *Discordantia nonnullae inter sanctos Eusebium, Hyeronimum at Aurelium Augustinum*, includes twenty-nine illustrations including Prophets and other pictures, all newly cut except the Proba.¹⁹⁸ They are as crudely cut as the first edition but have a similar vigour and charm. These are framed by round arches.¹⁹⁹

There is a further edition printed by Georgius Teutonicus, and Sixtus Riessinger, between 1481 and 1483, which contains only the twelve Sibyls and Proba. [See illustration of the Barbieri Sibyls and the Teutonicus Riessinger Proba in the following pages.]

The tract concerns a disagreement between St Jerome and St Augustine on the interpretation of Scripture. For Jerome, all recourse to pagan or non-Jewish pre-Christian Literature is wrong. At the end of the account of the dispute a new section begins:

De testimonio Docte Pontificis, trismegisti, et ed decem Sibyllis. C. VI

Lactantii Firmiani Libro primo. Nunc ad divina testimonia transeamus.²⁰⁰

Trismegistus and the ten Varronian Sibyls are cited from Lactantius (c. 240-c.320 AD). The rest of this section is a discussion about the prophecy of Hermes Book I, Chapter VI of the *Divine Institutes*.

¹⁹⁷ See transcription of the relevant section of the *Discordantia* on Sibyls in Appendix 8.

¹⁹⁸ See Hind, pp. 400-402.

¹⁹⁹ I am greatly indebted throughout this section to De Clercq.

²⁰⁰ Quoted by De Clercq, p. 120.

BARBIERI WOODCUTS



First and Second Series: Sibillae Erithrea and Europa

BARBIERI WOODCUTS



First and Second Series: Sibillae Samia and Cumana. Images from the verso can be seen through the paper causing apparent blurring

BARBIERI WOODCUTS



First and Second Series: Sibillae Hellespontica and Persica

BARBIERI WOODCUTS



First and Second Series: Sibillae Libica and Delphica

BARBIERI WOODCUTS



First and Second Series: Sibillae Tiburtina and Chimica



Proba, the fourth century Christian poetess: a woodcut, probably German, from the edition of the *Discordantia*, printed by Georgius Teutonicus and Sixtus Riessinger, between 1481 and 1483

It will readily be appreciated from the fact that some of the designs echo the woodcuts that the tract had a powerful influence on the designer of the pictorial floor of Siena Cathedral, and that there we find the collocation of Hermes Trismegistus and the Sibyls.

This work gives an account of Hermes Trismegistus's apparent prophecies. In *Concerning the Sibyls*, a long extract from Lactantius is given and a Latin translation of those oracles and passages which Lactantius quotes in the original Greek.

The next part of the work is entitled *Probe romane carmina*.²⁰¹ After that there is a section on Athanasius, and several prayers: the Dominican prayer, the *Ave Maria*, the *Te*

Deum and the *Gloria* attributed to St Thomas Aquinas, and a text of Donatus the Theologian.²⁰²

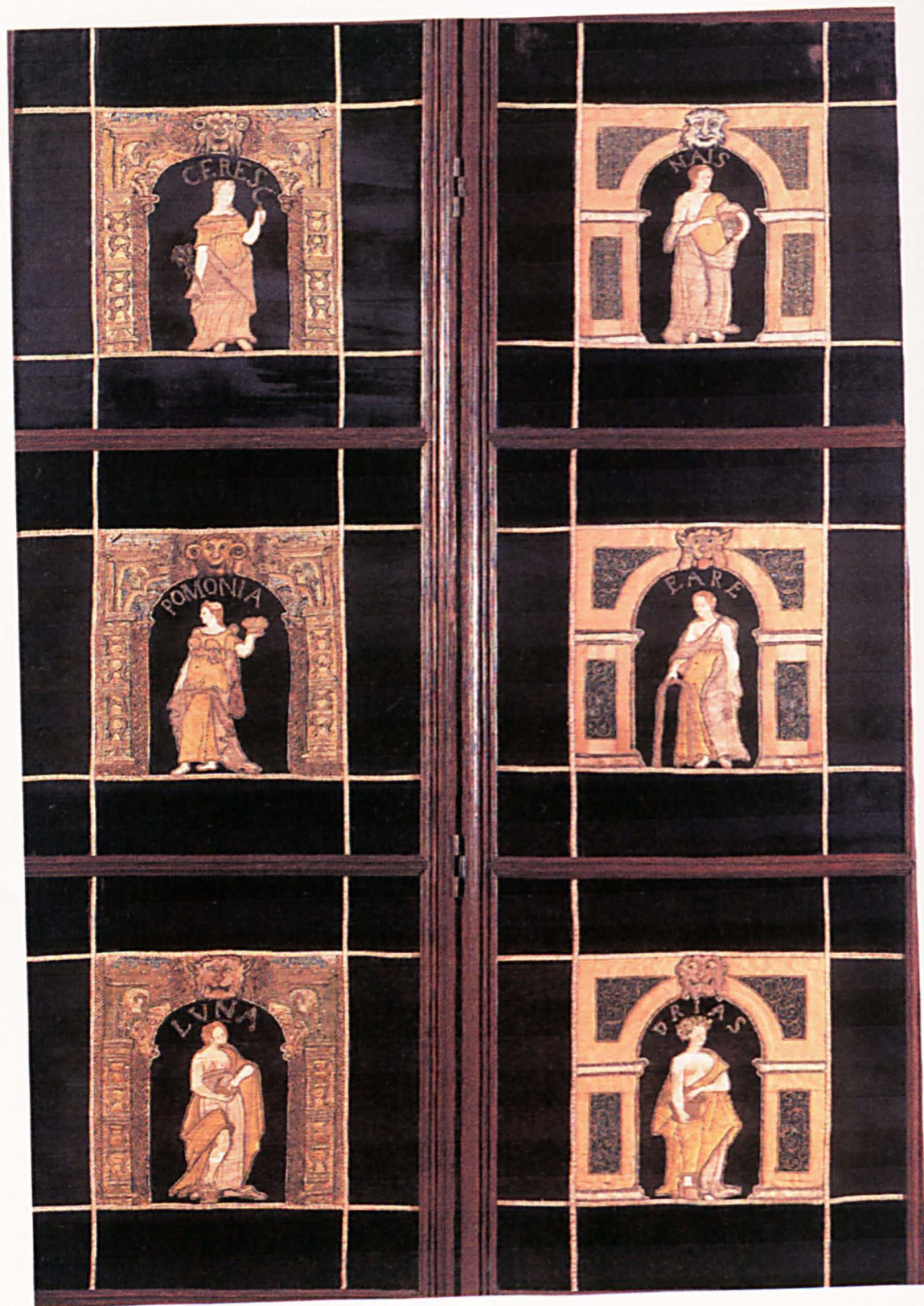
APPEARANCE OF THE WOODCUTS

Unlike the Baldini engravings, the Barbieri woodcuts have a clear grasp of Greek costume, *Costume all'antica*, even if that mode is not invariably used. It can be seen in the first edition Emerica and particularly the second edition Phrigia. It seems likely that Barbieri as artist is aware of the Sibyls at Rimini.

The rendering of Sibyls under round arches, or less commonly, square door-frames subsequently became an established convention in engravings. Seven years after the publication of these engravings, the twelve Sibyls at Piani, Imperia were painted in the

²⁰¹ 'The Roman poems of Proba.' Proba lived in the fourth century at the time when Christianity had just been made the official religion of the Empire. She wrote a poetic account of the struggle between Constantine and Maxentius, and composed from Virgilian scraps a *Cento*, or poem consisting of juxtaposed quotations, of parts of the Old and New Testaments.

²⁰² On the last page is found: *Registrum Huius libelli*, and at the bottom of the page: *Impressum Ro. An. Domini MCCCCLXXXI. Sedente Sixto IIII Pont. Max. An. Eius Undecimo. Die prima Mensis Decembris. Foeliciter.* (Roman Press, in the year 1481, in the pontificate of Sixtus IV, the eleventh year of his reign. 1 December.)



Hardwick Hall: a screen with symbolic female figures

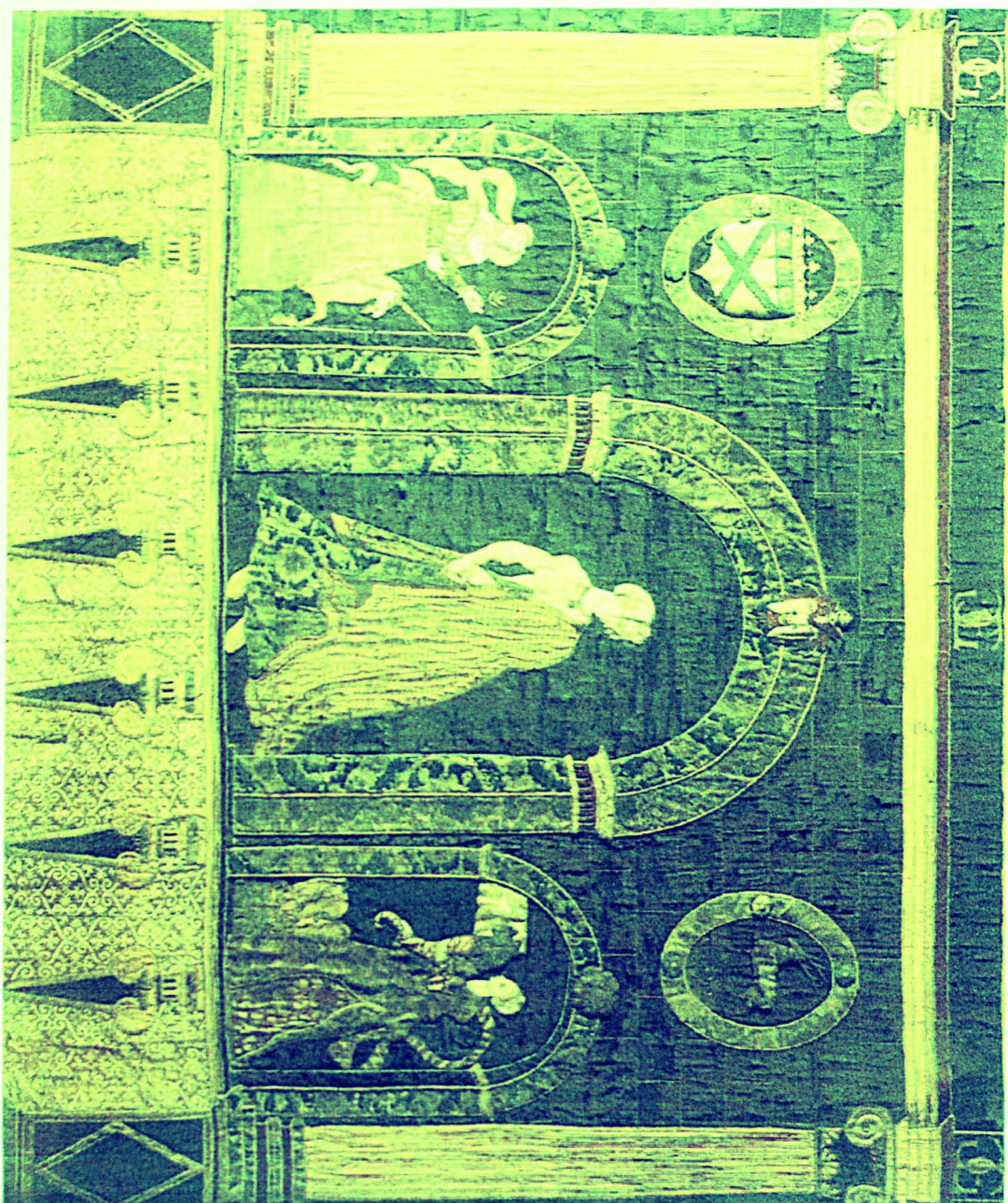
Church of Our Lady of the Assumption. It is interesting to note that the incumbent at the time was one Antoine Barberius. It is tempting to suppose that he was a relative of Barbieri but unfortunately, there is no known evidence to support or negate this. These Sibyls were all painted by Tomasso and Matteo de Busca under arches in exactly the Barbieri manner.²⁰³

Later, abstract qualities, Virtues, Graces, personified by female figures along with female historical figures representing moral qualities, were all commonly represented standing under arches. [See pictures opposite and following] We can see these a hundred years later, in a land far away, in Bess of Hardwick's embroideries at Chatsworth and Hardwick. We can be quite sure that these designs in England had an Italian inception. The legend of Lucretia, for example, was known in the version written by Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, Pope Pius II.²⁰⁴ Bess knew it well enough and was sufficiently impressed by it to christen her last child Lucretia in 1557. One of the most important of her huge embroideries at Hardwick features Lucretia.

²⁰³ Busca is a village near Saluzzo.

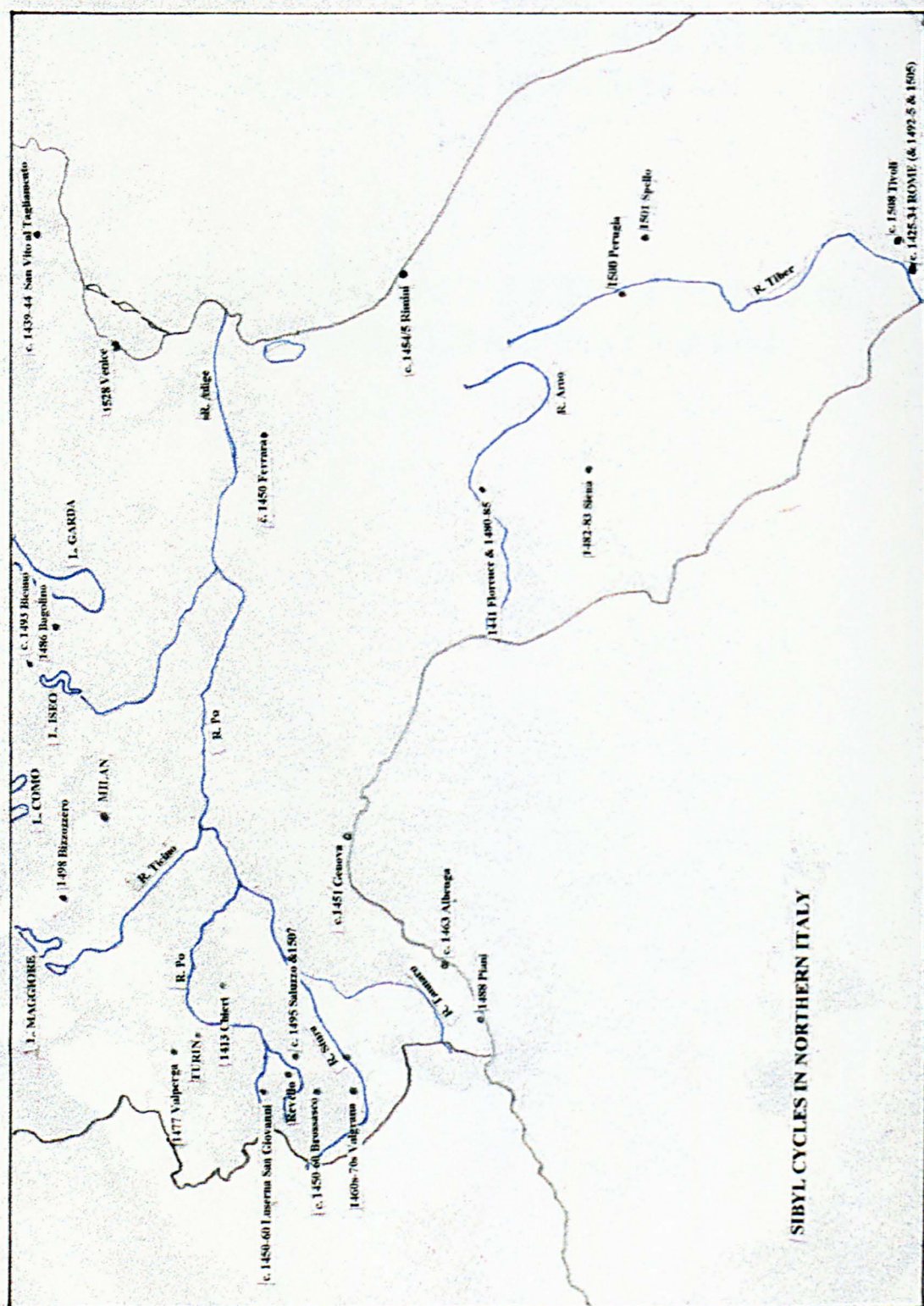
²⁰⁴ See Santina M. Levy, *An Elizabethan Inheritance: The Hardwick Hall Textiles* (London: National Trust, 1998), p. 69.

Hardwick Hall: Lucretia: one of the five Famous Women of the Ancient World



**PART III: THE SIBYL CYCLES OF CENTRAL
AND NORTHERN ITALY**

**SECTION I: SIBYL CYCLES BEFORE THE
ADVENT OF THE PRINTED IMAGE**



SIBYL CYCLES IN NORTHERN ITALY

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE SIBYL CYCLES IN ITALY

The authoritative list of Italian Sibyl paintings as previously known is published by De Clercq in, 'Quelques Series de Sibylles hors d'Italie', *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, LI, 1981. It lists twenty-two Italian sites where there are painted Sibyls. I can now add fifteen new sites to that list. This list comprises all the pictorial Sibyl Cycles in Italy of which I am aware at the time of writing, with their dates of composition.²⁰⁵ Examples of single carved or sculpted Sibyls, especially those made before Niccolò and Giovanni Pisano, are also included to indicate the earliest appearance of the Sibyl in Post-Classical pictorial Art. However, it will be obvious that many of the sites listed are of a date outside the ambit of the present dissertation and therefore will not be described or discussed therein. Those discussed in the dissertation are marked with an asterisk. The list is comprehensive, going beyond the Renaissance and the cycles studied here. This is in order to provide as useful and complete an account of the genre in Italy as possible, as a source of reference and to provide a context in which this work can be placed. Although the Pisani carvings were formative in the development of the iconographic convention in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, only the first appearance of Sibyls in their sculptural works is recorded here, since we are concerned primarily with pictorial, two dimensional art.

LIST OF SIBYL SITES IN ITALY

The Sibyl Cycles discussed in detail in this dissertation are marked with an asterisk. Those painted on the under surface of an arch are marked with Ω. Those which display Sibyls within *tondi* are marked with O. The two churches which are permanently closed to which no permission for access could be gained at the time of writing are marked thus: X.

²⁰⁵ N.B. There are no recorded Sibyl Cycles outside Italy until after 1483, the date of the Cycle on the floor of Siena Cathedral.

The mark # indicates a Cycle influenced by the Baccio Baldini engravings, those marked ~ are influenced by the Barbieri woodcuts.

c. 1072-78: SANT'ANGELO IN FORMIS: One Sibyl, 'Prophetissa' in a painted fresco, possibly Tiburtina.²⁰⁶

c. 1224-1259: SESSA AURUNCA: one carved Sibyl on the pulpit of the parish church.

c. 1224-1259: RAVELLO: one carved Sibyl on the pulpit of the parish church.

1301: PISA: The First of Pisano's Sculpted Sibyls on the exterior of the Baptistry.

c. 1400: CORTINA DI AMPEZZO: Five Sibyls seated together on a long bench. German style.²⁰⁷

*c. 1425-34: ROME: Cardinal Orsini's Palace of Montegiordano. Not now extant.

1441: FLORENCE: San Marco one Sibyl.

*c. 1439-44: SAN VITO AL TAGLIAMENTO: The Palazzo Altan.

*1447: FERRARA: 'Belriguardo' not now extant.

*c. 1450: FERRARA: The Casa Romei.

*O: c.1451: GENOA: The loggia of the Annunciation, at the Church of Santa Maria di Castello.

*c. 1454/5: RIMINI: The Tempio Malatestiano, The Chapel of the Ancestors.

²⁰⁶ See Fernanda De'Maffei, 'La Sibilla "Tiburtina" e "Prophetissa" nel ciclo degli affreschi di Sant' Angelo in Formis', *Miscellanea Cassinese*, 48, *Monastica IV*, 1984.

²⁰⁷ See F. M. Cornford, "Sybil Fresco at Cortina d'Ampezzo", *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, 10 (1898-1903), pp. 369-73, and Salvatore Settis, "Le Sibille di Cortina", in *Renaissance Studies in Honour of Craig Hugh Smyth*, 2 vols., (Firenze: Giunti Barbèra, 1985), II pp. 436-457.

- *O: c. 1450-60: BROSSASCO (Piedmont): the base of the campanile by the Church.
- *Ω: c. 1450-60: LUSERNA SAN GIOVANNI (Piedmont): Parish Church of San Giacomo. Originally on the left transept arch, now on its external north wall because of redesign. First example of Sibyls under an arch.
- *c. 1463: ALBENGA: The Bishop's Palace.
- *Ω: 1460s-70s: VALGRANA: Church of San Martino.
- 1465: The First Printed Edition of LACTANTIUS *Div. Inst.* published at Subiaco.
- *Ω O: 1477: VALPERGA: Church of San Giorgio.
- *the late 70s: FLORENCE: BACCIO BALDINI'S ENGRAVINGS.
- *1481: Filippo Barbieri's woodcuts.
- *1480-85: FLORENCE: Santa Trinità, the vaulting of the roof of the Sassetti Chapel. Four Sibyls. Ghirlandaio.
- *# ~: 1482-83: SIENA: The Floor of Siena Duomo.
- Ω (X):1486: BAGOLINO: Chiesa di San Rocco. Giovan Pietro da Cemmo, c.f. Bienno.
- *~:1488: PIANI, IMPERIA: The Church of Santa Maria Assunta di Piani, Imperia.
- c. 1489: CARPI: Il Palazzo di Taliano Delci Pio. 'The Room of the Sibyls'. Not now extant.
- *1490s: REVELLO: PASSION PLAY (SIBYLS LIST)
- *1492-94: ROME: Borgia Apartments, Room of the Sibyls (12 Sibyls) Pinturicchio.
- *Ω: c. 1493: BIENNO Chiesa di Santa Maria.: Artist: Giovan Pietro da Cemmo. Underside of main arch to Sanctuary.
- *#: Mid-1490s: SALUZZO: Chiesa di san Giovanni, the Marquis's Chapel, later to become the mortuary chapel of Ludovico I. Two sculpted Sibyls.

*Ω (X): 1498: BIZZOZZERO: Chiesa di Santo Stefano. (Varese).

1500: PERUGIA: Collegio di Cambio. Perugino & Raphael.²⁰⁸

*1500: ROME: Santa Maria sopra Minerva, The Carafa Chapel. Four Sibyls: Tibur, Delphi, Cuma, and Hellespont. Raffaellino del Garbo.

*1501: SPELLO: Santa Maria Maggiore, Four Sibyls: Erythraea, Europa, Tiburtina, Samia. Pinturicchio.

*Ω: c. 1505: TIVOLI: 12 Sibyls.

*O: 1507: CORI: The Augustinian Church.

*#: c. 1507: SALUZZO: Casa Cavassa, the Room of the Sibyls a cycle of 12 Sibyls.

*1509 10: ROME: Santa Maria del Popolo, Pinturicchio.

1508-12: ROME: The Sistine Chapel, five Sibyls.

*1514: ROME: S. Maria della Pace. Four Sibyls: Cumana, Perisica, Phrygia, Tiburtina. Raphael.

1518: CREVOLADOSSOLA: San Pietro e Paulo.

1528: VENICE: Sta. Maria dei Miracoli. Five Sibyls left from what was probably a full cycle. Pier Maria Pennacchi and collaborators. Between the lunettes at the top of the wall directly under the roof, which is painted with Prophets and Saints.

1532: MONESIGLIO: The church in the Castle of Monesiglio. Six Sibyls. Painted by Antioio Ocellio da Ceva. dated 25 September of that year. They are arranged in the same order as those painted much earlier under the arch in Valperga (1477).

1532-34: URBANIA: Corpus Domini.

c. 1595: PAVIA: Santa Maria di Canepanova.

²⁰⁸ This is not a true cycle, but a picture with four Sibyls and fragmentary, atypical oracles.

c. 1600: CERTOSA DI PESIO: by the school of Moncalvo.

1605-10: LORETO: The Basilica and the Holy House (itself inside the Basilica).

1610-11: MONTEFORTINO: Santa Maria.

1690: SENIGALLIA: Palazzo Mastai.

O:1750: VICOFORTE: The Sanctuary of Monregalese. Alternatively named 'The Sanctuary of Vicoforte, Mondovì', Eight Sibyls in a cycle of Sibyls, Prophets and Apostles. Painted by Mattia Bortoloni. Medallions. Alternatively attributed by Cornagliotti to Felice Biella.

**PART III: THE SIBYL CYCLES OF CENTRAL
AND NORTHERN ITALY**

**SECTION I: SIBYL CYCLES BEFORE THE
ADVENT OF THE PRINTED IMAGE**

**CHAPTER I: THE EARLY SIBYLS: ORSINI
PALACES; GERMANS IN GENOA**

CHAPTER I: THE EARLY SIBYLS: ORSINI PALACES; GERMANS IN GENOA

ROME: CARDINAL GIORDANO ORSINI'S PALACE OF MONTEGIORDANO c. 1431, CERTAINLY BEFORE 1434

This was destroyed when the building was demolished in the sixteenth century

All authorities seem to agree that this room was the inspiration for other Sibyl Cycles throughout the north of Italy as evidenced by the letter from Poggio Bracciolini to Roberto Valturio in relation to the Sibyls of Rimini.²⁰⁹ The room was a statement of the validity of Humanism and the study of Classical Literature, symbolised by the images of the Sibyls and their predictions of the coming of Jesus Christ. The Orsini were of enormous political and cultural significance and emulation of this room signified both a political and cultural alignment as well as a certain social status. Bracciolini says in the letter that it was painted in Eugenius's reign. Since Eugenius's reign began in 1431, then we can now date the fresco to the three years 1431-4, even though many authorities place it as early as 1425.

The Identity of the Orsini Sibyls: Their Number, Names and Order

There were 12 Sibyls, Sibylla Europa and Sibylla Agrippa being added to the end of the Varronian list, the Varronian order being preserved. Although the palazzo was demolished in the sixteenth century there are independent contemporary descriptions of the room that survive. Appendix 8 at the end of this dissertation entitled, '*Comparison of Manuscripts*' contains a list of extant manuscript sources, and a comparison of the Tongerlo, Edinburgh and Olomouc manuscript records of the oracles, and comparison of the Sibyls' appearance in five manuscripts.

²⁰⁹ See Poggio Bracciolini, *Lettere. III. Epistolarum Familiarium libri secundum volumen*, ed. H. Harth (Firenze: L. S. Olschi, 1984-1987).

One of these manuscript accounts, the Olomouc manuscript, is a description of the wall as recorded by an eye-witness.²¹⁰ There are inevitably, very slight differences in spelling and wording, in only one case significant, and in the case of the Sibilla Cumana a longer extract from Virgil's *Eclogue* is given in the Olomouc account. This has considerable authority, given the circumstances of its production.²¹¹ These manuscripts are difficult of access. The monastery at Tongerlo were unable to reply to correspondence or evidently to grant access, but some of the oracles recorded in the Tongerlo manuscript are reproduced by Matilde Gagliardo.²¹² I have used these in the appendix for comparison with the other two manuscripts. Photocopies of the Edinburgh and Olomouc manuscripts with transcriptions and translations are reproduced in Appendices 3 and 4.

Conjectural Design and Construction of the Camera dei Paramenti

The room was actually referred to as the *Camera dei Paramenti*, 'the tapestry room' and it is therefore possible that the Sibyls were embroidered on wall hangings.²¹³ It is more likely however, that they were painted on the walls as though on wall hangings. This was a relatively common device in painted rooms, and one that was adopted at San Vito al Tagliamento by Bishop Antonio Altan, Cardinal Orsini's friend, only some five years or little more after the Orsini cycle was installed in Rome.

There are two rooms decorated with Sibyls, at San Vito al Tagliamento and at Albenga, that we can be quite sure bear a direct Orsini influence. Both were done for Orsini protégées. These are very like each other in design; therefore it is sensible to think that they

²¹⁰ Státní Vědecká Knihovna, MS M II 58 (ex I IV 8, XV sec.), 248r-v.

²¹¹ It was produced for an Inventory of Ecclesiastical Buildings and their Contents. The oracles seem to have been recorded in situ.

²¹² Matilde Gagliardo, *Le Sibille di Casa Romei: Storia e Restauro*, ed. Carla Di Francesca, (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1998)

²¹³ See Appendix 8: Comparison of Manuscripts at the end of this dissertation. The Olomouc Manuscript refers to it in this way.

THE ORSINI TRIPARTITE STRUCTURE SEEN AT SAN VITO, ALBENGA AND FERRARA



bear a close relationship to the design of the lost room in the Orsini Palace in Rome. [See the picture opposite for rooms decorated in the Orsini manner.]

Conjectural Form of the Orsini Fresco

The Orsini Form can be deduced from the similarities between San Vito and Albenga. In both rooms there is a painted dado about three feet from the floor, beneath which is a trompe l'oeil three dimensional design. At San Vito this is faux tapestry, at Albenga, geometric shapes playing with perspective to confuse and entertain the eye. Above the dado stand the Sibyls, either in a garden with verdure, or standing in front of a mille fleurs tapestry; the frescos are so deteriorated that it is difficult to tell which of these is represented. At the top of the wall there is a broad decorated band just below the ceiling or decorated arched vaulting. This tripartite division of the walls in Sibyl rooms seems to be typical of Orsini frescos and those directly or indirectly influenced by them. This overall structure and pattern is echoed at the Casa Romei, Ferrara and to a lesser extent at Piani, Imperia.

The Orsini room became famous, fashionable and then canonical, defining a way of rendering the Sibyls as to their number, their names, their oracles and their appearance.

1439/40 – 1444 SAN VITO AL TAGLIAMENTO: THE PALAZZO ALTAN

Text: Latin on Scrolls. Sibyls standing in front of millefleurs. Contemporary aristocratic costume. Number not known but Sibilla Agrippa is present

There are precious few remnants of the Sibyls of San Vito. There is more than one 'Palazzo Altan' in San Vito; the Altan dynasty were powerful in the region for many generations. At present the sixteenth-century palace is the subject of extensive and sensitive restoration. However, the fifteenth-century palace containing the Sibyl Cycle was demolished by developers in the 1960s to make way for a singularly unattractive but



San Vito al Tagliamento: dado and standing life-size Sibyl in the Orsini style, c.f. Albenga

doubtless profitable block of flats.²¹⁴ Those that could be rescued are now in the town Museum of Architecture.

The room of the Early Renaissance Palazzo containing Sibyls was commissioned by Bishop Antonio Altan (in the Bishopric from c. 1439/40-1444). Bishop Altan was a friend of Cardinal Orsini and it is perfectly clear from what remains of the frescos, exhibited in the local museum, that they belong to the Orsini mode. The division of the walls was as follows: a trompe l'oeil dado rail appearing to jut from the wall, supported by classical ancones whose vertical face is decorated with a trompe l'oeil geometric pattern. On this shelf-like structure the Sibyls appear to stand in verdure. Beneath the dado a trompe l'oeil cloth of rich damask appears to hang. [See picture opposite] This should be compared with the pictures of Albenga, another Orsini-influenced Bishop's Palace, as close to the Western border of Italy as this is to its Eastern margin. [See picture opposite page 206]

The named Sibyls are in a different order from the Orsini series. They are standing full figure representations and are without attributes i.e. characteristic possessions about their persons.²¹⁵

Pictorial Representation

These frescos mark a transition between the International Gothic style and that of the Renaissance. They are a species of the Gothic cavalcade form found in decorated rooms in Northern Italy, where aristocratic figures in heraldic or symbolic costume appear to stand or process around the room. In these there is little use of perspective *mise en scène*.

The Sibyls at San Vito al Tagliamento are essentially pretty, upper-class, Renaissance Italian women, in the more expensive fashions of the time. No attempt seems to have been made to convey the characters, appearance or attributes of the original Classical Sibyls: there

²¹⁴ The City Architect, Dott. Paolo de Rocco, himself then a young boy, worked frantically with his father, the then City Architect, in the ten days granted for the removal of the frescos.

²¹⁵ See Gagliardo, *Le Sibille nel Giardino* p. 28 and f.n. 128, which provides a bibliography.

San Vito al Tagliamento: Sibylla Agrippa fragment



are no mad women or crones, neither do these beautiful women appear to have distinguishing attributes. Their appearance, it seems, was meant to convey a courtly procession of dames of high status, as in a seemly and serene religious ritual, but with all the pleasurable advantages of a room full of attractive women. The painterly technique however begins to play with the Renaissance knowledge of optics and perspective, and the women are set as though standing amongst verdure. This may be a rendering of tapestry mille fleurs, but the surface of the preserved images is so damaged as to make a judgement uncertain.

How Manuscripts can be used to restore damaged frescos

At the time of writing, many of the frescos have been removed for restoration and chemical treatment and are therefore inaccessible. There remains only one fragment of writing. This can be used to illustrate how this research, having assembled a theoretical 'canonical text', can use that, together with the available manuscripts, to identify Sibyls whose names are destroyed and to reconstruct damaged text. When compared with the Revello list and the Edinburgh and Tongerlo manuscripts, it is possible to verify that the inscription at San Vito accords with the canonical text and to deduce what the whole scroll would originally have said. [See the picture opposite.] From what letters and words can still be descried, it is clear that the fragment belongs to the Oracle cited in the manuscripts for the Sibilla Agrippa. At San Vito this is rendered Egrappa 9°. Whilst the oracle remains the same as that of the Orsini Sibyl called 'Agrippa' by the Tongerlo manuscript description and 'Egyptia' by the Edinburgh manuscript, the ordering of the Sibyls was different. Agrippa / Egyptia was the twelfth Sibyl in the Roman order, not the ninth. She is also twelfth on the Edinburgh manuscript whose order is different from that regarded as canonical. On the Roman wall the ten Varronian Sibyls came first and then the two extra were added, Europa and Agrippa.

The four manuscripts, Edinburgh, Revello, Tongerlo and Olomouc differ slightly in their rendering of the Oracle.²¹⁶ It is a useful exercise at this point to compare manuscripts since this illustrates the way in which text is transmuted through scribal error. I have therefore given a very detailed comparison of four manuscript renderings, connected to the fragment of text at San Vito, since it is the first of the extant sites using the canonical texts. In the descriptions that follow of all other sites however, I shall simply relate what is found on the walls to the theoretically accurate canonical text, unless what is found on a particular wall accords with a known corrupt text. The construction of the canonical text is found in Appendix 2 at the end of this dissertation, with a chart to show its distribution.

The precise origins of three of these manuscripts is unknown but some contextual information, not already given, is available. The provenance of the Edinburgh manuscript has already been accounted for. The Tongerlo MS. is held at the Abbey of that name in Belgium. Requests to see the original have proved fruitless.²¹⁷ However, in 1536 a fresco of Sibyls was painted in the Abbey, and it is an educated guess to date the manuscript from that time, supposing that an observer were sent to see the famous Orsini room in Rome and bring back a description to assist the design of the projected fresco in Tongerlo. The Olomouc MS. is a seemingly quickly written manuscript, certainly not meant for display. It has scratchings out and little attempt is made to adorn its appearance. It is a working document recording information for use in committee, rather than the work of a trained scribe, intended to be part of a codex. It is in a difficult script wholly uninfluenced by late fifteenth-century Italic.²¹⁸ Its purpose appears to be to make an inventory of all ecclesiastical buildings in

²¹⁶ The names indicate only the location of the libraries in which these MSS. are to be found, not necessarily the nationality of the scribe who made them. That is unknown.

²¹⁷ I am here relying on the extracts published in *Le Sibille di Casa Romei: Storia e Restauro*, ed. Carla di Francesca (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1998).

²¹⁸ See Appendix 4 at the end of this dissertation for *facsimile*.

Rome with their fittings and fixtures. It is however, the work of a careful and detailed observer.

Comparison of Manuscripts providing evidence as to the missing text at San Vito

There are marked differences in the standard of Latin literacy as between the four different scribes. It will be seen that the Edinburgh manuscript, of the first years of the 1400s has a high standard of grammar and subtlety in sentence construction. We know it is not a description of the Orsini wall but an earlier prescriptive manuscript which may have been its source. The same high standard of Latinity is found in the Revello manuscript, also prescriptive, which may be as late as the 1490s but copied from an older source. It will be noted that the other manuscripts, which are simply witnesses' reports of the text they have seen on the Orsini wall, have less pure Classical spelling. These seem to be the work of those who use and probably speak Latin (note the Italianate spellings) but in a vernacular form. They seem to have been taking notes at speed and spelling, and occasionally constructing the sense, in their own habitual manner. I have emboldened significant variants in the rendering of the different manuscripts. There is one absolute misreading '*venustas* / *vetustas*' (beauty / age). *Venustas* occurs in all the manuscripts except that at Edinburgh. Edinburgh's *vetustas* must be taken as the original however, given its early date and the extreme care lavished on the script and production. The scribal error in changing *vetustas* to *venustas* is understandable, since it renders the paradox that although the young Christ is directly connected to his spiritual root in God the Father, nonetheless, when on earth, like a desiccated leaf, he will wither under the cruelty of men and lose his beauty. Since we can be sure that the Olomouc manuscript is a direct copy of the Orsini wall text, and since it agrees with the other manuscript renderings, we can be fairly certain that the scribal error appeared on the Orsini wall.

Edinburgh

In the Edinburgh manuscript, the equivalent Sibyl to the 'Egrippa' at San Vito is called 'Sibilla Egiptia'. The oracle is as follows:

Invisibile verbum palpabitur et germinabit ut radix et **sec**abitur ut folium non apparebit **vetustas** **alius** materna et flebit deus Letitia sempiterna et ab hominibus conculcabitur et nascetur ex matre ut deus et conversabitur ut peccator.²¹⁹

('et circumdabit illum alvus', is missing from the Edinburgh manuscript) The Edinburgh manuscript therefore reads:

The invisible word will be made flesh and though he will spring as from the root, he will be withered like a leaf and will not appear aged. He will weep, despised of men. He will be born from his mother as God so that the sinner may be converted.

Revello

Invisibile verbum palpabitur, et germinabit ut radix, **sicc**abitur ut folium,et non apparebit **venustas** eius. Circumdabitur alvus maternus et flebit Deus letitia sempiterna,et ab hominibus conculcabitur. Nascetur ex matre ut Deus et conversabitur ut peccator.

The invisible Word will be made flesh, and (though) he will spring directly from the root, he will wither in the leaf, and his beauty will not appear. A mother's womb will confine him, and God, the eternal joy shall weep, and be despised by

²¹⁹ These differences are surely the result of clerical error; '**venustas**' makes much more sense in context than '**vetustas**', as does '**alvus maternus**' rather than '**alius materna**'. Throughout this dissertation, I shall highlight words or parts of words which vary in the manuscripts for the convenience of the reader, either by underlining or boldening.

men. He will be born of a human mother, though God, so that the sinner may be converted.

Tongerlo

Indivisible verbum palpabitur et germinabit ut radix **et** siccabitur ut folium et non apparebit venustas eius **et circumdabit illum** alvus maternus et flebit deus leticia sempiterna et ab hūminibus conculcabitur et nascetur ex matre ut deus et conversabitur ut peccator.

*The **undivided** word will be made flesh and though he will spring directly from the root, he will be withered like a leaf and his beauty will not appear. His mother's womb will confine Him. God, the eternal joy, will weep, despised of men. He will be born of a human mother though God, that the sinner may be converted.*

Olomouc

Sibilla Agrippa: sic Ait de Christo Invisibile verbum palpabitur Et germinabit ut radix et Siccabitur ut folium et non apparebit venustas eius et circumdabitur alvus maternus et flebit deus letitia sempiterna et ab hominibus conculcabitur et nascetur ex mater ut deus et conversabitur ut peccator.

Sibilla Agrippa: thus speaks of Christ: The invisible word will be made palpable flesh and though he will spring as from the root yet he will be withered like a leaf and his beauty will not appear and he will be confined by his mother's womb and God, the eternal joy, will weep and will be despised of men and he will be born from his mother as God and that the sinner may be converted.

Let us suppose that, at San Vito al Tagliamento, a copy of the canonical text, as used for the Orsini cycle in Rome, was used by the designer of the fresco, since this is the most likely event. Bishop Altan, as a close friend of the Orsinis, would have had easy access to their archive. Let us then, using the Revello text, trace what elements of it are still found on

the fresco and deduce thereby what the missing words would have been.²²⁰ The letters actually remaining on the end portion of the scroll at San Vito al Tagliamento are emboldened.

Invisibile verbum palpabitur, et germinabit ut **radix**, **siccabitur ut folium**, et non apparebit **venustas** eius. Circumdabitur alvus maternus et flebit **D(eus)** **leticia** sempiterna, et ab hominibus conculcabitur. Nascetur ex matre ut Deus et **conversabitur ut peccator**.

I have here given a very detailed comparison of the fragment of text on the wall with the available manuscripts. This is to demonstrate how this research can contribute to the understanding and knowledge of what has been lost at particular sites that are partially destroyed or that have been inexpertly retouched or repainted. In relation to the rest of the Sibyl sites described in this dissertation, I shall simply compare what text is found in the frescos to the canonical text to check whether the fresco is heterodox, or adopting the canonical form. The kind of reconstructive process I have just demonstrated will not be undertaken for every site, for reasons of space and because such an enterprise would be tedious to the readers, who now have the necessary evidence to undertake such a task themselves. Two facsimile manuscripts, Edinburgh and Olomouc are given in Appendices 3 and 4; the construct of the original 'canonical' text is in Appendix 2. I shall now proceed to catalogue and record the Sibyl Cycles of Italy.

1447 FERRARA, 'BELRIGUARDO'

Country residence of Lionello d'Este: no longer extant.

In 1447 Guarino da Verona was involved with others in a question of iconography, providing the Marquis Lionello d'Este at Ferrara with well-known quotations and some

²²⁰ It is a reasonable assumption, but nevertheless an assumption, that the designers of the San Vito fresco used the canonical list. That is why I give three other manuscript renderings with which the Cycle may be compared.

iconographic innovations in the manner of presenting the Muses.²²¹ He was among those Humanists in contact with Cardinal Orsini. It may have been he who suggested the inclusion of the Sibyls.

The ‘Studiolo’ or study at Belriguardo.

A few details are known about this room, no longer extant. The fresco was painted by Nicolò Panizzato.

Like the room at the Bishop’s palace at Albenga it was a study, decorated with Sibyls. It was known as the *guarda chamera dele Sibile* (the ante room of the Sibyls), being the anteroom of Leonello d’Este’s ‘Green Room’. The Sibyls were surrounded by greenery and flowers. The posture and garb of the Sibyls is now unknown. However, the Sibyls at the Casa Romei in Ferrara, which were probably modelled on these, were standing, life-sized, full figures, as were all the Sibyls in such rooms that are known to be before that date. The description by Sabadino degli Arienti (in 1497), cited by Gagliardo, mentions *loro scripture prophecie* (their written prophecy) but does not give any details of it.²²² Whether it were Latin or vernacular is unknown.

Arienti’s note on it is as follows:²²³

²²¹ On the decoration of the study at Belfiore see the end of the catalogue of an exhibition in Milan in 1991, *Le Muse e il Principe. Catalogo and Saggi*, A. Mottola Molino and M. Natale (Modena: [n. pub.], 1991).

²²² See Gagliardo, *Le Sibille nel Giardino*, note 126. See my translation of *Le Sibille di Casa Romei*, p. 7.

²²³ See my translation of *Le Sibille di Casa Romei* f.n. p.7: c.f. S, Settis, (see f.n. 1 above), pp. 27-8 and notes 124-127 therein. The documents regarding the Room of the Sibyls are to be found in the State Archives of Modena, in the Duchy of d’Este room, *Memoriale I* (1447) cc. 37 (9 maggio), 81 (10 luglio), 115 (9 settembre), 129 (6 ottobre), 150 (15 novembre). These papers are all already cited and partially transcribed in F. Artioli, *Gli Estensi e la delizia di Belriguardo*, (Ferrara: [n. pub.],

Casa Romei: the Room of the Sibyls



*E ala sinistra mano entramo in una antecamera in alto vaga, in qui sono dipincte le Sybille con loro scripte prophecie, et con alto et egregio capocielo sopra el lecto elaborato e pincto, e illuminata per gratiosa finestra sopra il brolio con laudabile misura.*²²⁴

c. 1450 FERRARA: THE CASA ROMEI

Painter unknown. Twelve full-figure, standing Sibyls. Orsini selection. Text vernacular. Costume contemporary Italian aristocratic dress. Background naturalistic, with some attempt at perspective. They stand before a hedge with cane supports. The room is entered from the preceding, 'Room of the Prophets'.²²⁵

The Room of the Sibyls in the Casa Romei typifies Orsini style. [See picture opposite] There is however, unlike San Vito al Tagliamento and Albenga, no direct Orsini connection. The d'Estes of Ferrara gave strong encouragement and patronage to the new learning. It is most likely that Belriguardo was modelled on an Orsini fresco and that this

1988), pp. 54-55. Only part of this is recently re-edited by A. Franceschini, *Artisti a Ferrara in età umanistica e rinascimentale. Testimonianze archivistiche, 1, Dal 1341 al 1471*, (Ferrara-Roma [n. pub.], 1993, pp. 277 (doc. 583, i, c. 37), 279 (doc. 583, ee, c. 115, also because of a misprint it is written as 116), (in c. 150 the piece on the "guarda camera dale Sibille" is not transcribed but only that which immediately follows it which is about other works by Nicolò Panizato, p 280, doc. 583, oo). For the description of Sabadino c.f. W. L. Gundersheimer, *Art and Life at the Court of Ercole I d'Este: The "De triumphis religionis" of Sabdino degli Arienti* (Geneva: [n. pub.], 1972, pp. 19, 61.

²²⁴ *And on the left hand we entered an anteroom of indeterminate height, in which were depicted the Sibyls with their written prophesies, and with a high and distinguished canopy above the elaborate painted couch. It is illuminated by a gracious window of an admirable size overlooking the garden.* [Note use of Latin, *lecto* for Italian *letto*, couch.]

²²⁵ All that I write in relation to Ferrara owes an immense debt to Carla di Francesco and Matilde Gagliardo and their wonderful research and restoration work on the Casa Romei, as recorded in *Le Sibille di Casa Romei: Storia e Restauro*.

emulates the d'Este room. However, it is clear, when comparing this fresco with the Orsini rooms, that the source of the Sibyl sequences at Ferrara was found in Orsini palaces.

Like the Orsini sites, the division of the walls is the familiar tri-partite convention. The Sibyls stand above a dado, beneath which all trace of design is now lost. Above them, there is a broad band of decoration next to the ceiling, with festal garlands and cherubs with pots of Greenery. As at Albenga, there is a small shrine inset in one wall, with a picture of the Virgin and Child, Jesus. This early arrangement of a Room of the Sibyls, is perhaps celebrating the intuitive and emotional Truth conceived by women.

The Sibyls here have no attributes and it is difficult to discern identifying facial features. Their costumes are various versions of contemporary fashions. At this stage in the development of the Sibyl Cycle, the figures do not display the highly individual identifying headgear and other features of dress, based on Humanist research into Classical Sibyls, which manifest themselves later, for example in the Baldini engravings and in the *intagli* on the floor of Siena Duomo. The Casa Romei Sibyls are of natural human height and stand or seem to move upright about the room.

They are on a narrow path in front of what is clearly a hedge held back by garden canes which divide the hedge visually into rectangular sections rather like those on the black background of the marble pavement at Siena. At Siena, the Sibyls appear to be standing on a narrow pavement in front of a black, stone, wall built of rectangular blocks. The divisions between these blocks are very similar in position and scale to the effect made by the canes in the Casa Romei. It is as though the designer of the floor at Siena had seen a black and white engraving or woodcut of the Casa Romei Sibyls, not coloured and therefore not wholly understood.

At Ferrara it is not clear whether the Sibyls are inside the garden, or *hortus conclusus*, enclosed by the hedge, or outside it, instructing those who would enter, like the pictures of women, hanging on the exterior of the hedge in the *Roman de la Rose*. All previous writers on the topic have assumed they are outside, in or near a garden. It is also however, entirely



Casa Romei: Modern Loggia with canes and verdure



The Casa Romei: The Room of the Sibyls; note the background canes and verdure

possible that they are standing in a loggia in which hedging or climbing plants are grown at the open arches, supported by canes or trellis. I have seen this still done in Italy on the open loggia at first floor level. [See the picture opposite] This makes sense of the painted architectural features at ceiling height in the Casa Romei, from which swags of verdure suspend. If the Sibyls are outside in a garden, they hang from the sky.

The Sibyls hold huge scrolls, which furl out as in a breeze. The oracles are different from all other known cycles in Italy in that they are in the vernacular but so vitiated that it is hard to identify much.²²⁶ However, enough remains to recognise that the oracles are canonical.

The artist seems to have been influenced by Piero della Francesca who visited Ferrara at this period. In the next year, 1451, Piero was working on the Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini and may have taken the idea of Sibyls to Rimini from Ferrara so that they were later incorporated into the Chapel of the Ancestors as sculptural works. The Rimini Sibyls though, represent the 'Throned' version of the iconography. This may have come from Florence. As we have seen, Poggio Bracciolini wrote a letter in Florence in 1454 to Roberto Valturio, who was writing the scheme for Rimini and had requested information about the iconography of Sibyls.²²⁷

²²⁶ See Carla di Francesco and others, *Le Sibille di Casa Romei: Storia e restauro* for an exhaustive discussion of the details of the text.

²²⁷ A possible account of the transmission of the idea for Sibyls is as follows: Piero della Francesca worked at Ferrara, saw the Belriguardo Sibyls and influenced the artist who painted the Casa Romei Sibyls. The Belriguardo Sibyls impressed him as a subject. He then went to Rimini in 1451 and discussed Sibyls with those designing the decorative schemes for the chapels. Valturio, gripped by the idea wrote to Florence, not Ferrara, to Poggio for advice on Sibylline iconography.

The Vernacular Quotations at the Casa Romei, Ferrara

This is the only known Cycle in the whole of Italy that has the oracles written in the vernacular.²²⁸ The room is likely to have been a wedding gift from Giovanni Romei to his young bride. She may not have had Latin.

One should however, be very careful before assuming that women in the early Renaissance were not educated in Latin, especially in Ferrara. One of the great founders of Humanist education, Guarino, was tutor there to the d'Este children at the time when Polissena, Romei's bride, was growing up. Guarino was invited to become the tutor of Lionello d'Este, son of Nicolò d'Este, Lord of Ferrara, in 1436 and died in Ferrara in 1460, a decade or so after the decoration of this room. Da Feltre, his friend and collaborator, was one of the pioneers of co-education, teaching aristocratic girls as well as boys. Romei's bride, his second wife, Polissena, was the daughter of Meliaduse d'Este. She may well have had Latin. Perhaps a more likely explanation for the vernacular oracles was that the financier, Romei, son of Pietro the merchant, in his rapid acquisition of riches and meteoric social ascension, had not himself acquired Latin.

I will assume, with Gagliardo, that the Cycle of Sibyls starts with the Sibyl immediately to the left of the door through which one enters the Room of the Sibyls from the Room of the Prophets, and continues clock-wise round the room.

TEXT

Note: The transcriptions on the scrolls are semi-diplomatic. They are transcribed here with the following system: letters about which there is no doubt are emboldened; letters in

²²⁸ I am dependent for analysis of the relationship of the vernacular text to the Orsini inscriptions on my translation of Matilde Gagliardo, 'Le Sibille di Giovanni Romei' in *Le Sibille di Casa Romei: Storia e restauro*, p. 30 *et seq.* for an exhaustive analysis of the remaining fragments of text, and conclusions about each Sibyl's faithfulness to the original Latin quotations on the Roman wall.

Casa Romei: Sibillae Persica and Lybica



parentheses are those resulting from writing contractions found in the text in full; square brackets indicate suggestions for missing letters

1: PERSICA

The vernacular seems to be a translation of the Orsini Latin. [See picture opposite]

...P(er)ch(é) el...ge...nel...n()...al d(e)lere / ...g[re] mio di la verzene ce... /
...piè de lei fortiez[a] p()poti..

We can compare this with the prophecy of the Sibylla Persica, given by the Olomouc manuscript:

**Ecce bestia conculaberis et gignetur dominus in orbem et gremium virginis
erit salus gencium et pedes eius in valitudinem hominum.**

*Behold, He will tread down the beasts, and all growing things, Lord of all the
world in the lap of a virgin, he will be the saviour of mankind and his feet bring
the health of men.*

Gagliardo notes that partial and not particularly productive comparisons can be made with the vernacular tradition of the same oracles, dependent themselves, in all probability, on the original canonical form, the Orsini Palace cycle. Thus for example in the *Sacra Rappresentatione* (Mystery Play) of the *Annunciation* by Feo Belcari (put on in Florence in 1471) we find ‘il gremio d’una vergene’, ‘i piè’ and ‘forteza’.²²⁹ In the Bologna Play Cycle (second half of the Quattrocento) one again encounters, ‘gremio d’una vergene’.²³⁰ The noun ‘forteza’ for ‘valitudo’ recurs also in verses of the Sibylla Persica in the engravings

²²⁹ L. Banfi, *Sacre rappresentazioni del Quattrocento*, (Turin:[n. pub.], 1963), p. 72.

²³⁰ V. De Bartholemaeis, *Laude drammatiche e rappresentazioni sacre*, III, (Florence: [n. pub.], 1943), p.214.

attributed to Baccio Baldini (c. the late 70s of the *Quattrocento*).²³¹ This substitution also occurs in the oracle of the same prophetess in a codex of the *Biblioteca Riccardiana di Firenze*.²³² To the proposition previously mentioned see also the prophecy of the Sibylla Persica in *Prologue A* in the Revello *Passion Play* (last quarter of the *Quattrocento*): “*fortificato serà ogni homo dapoy*” a verse which is found again in the words of the Sibilla Europa in *Prologue B* and the oracle of the Sibilla Persica.²³³

2: LIBICA

Again, the vernacular seems to be a rendering of the Orsini Latin.

**Echo verrà ... (et) lo [s]ig(no)re L.. le tenebre (con)demse / Sti ... la ...poi
...Et ...e...mia loquella le disgrupp[a] / ...ate uno ... d ...di homini ...h ...quo
un / P ...uc ...Et q(ue)lla uerzene delle [h]umane ... / R... nato...nivo
...o...ra ...mo caro ... l... / E... moro ...d(e) lama(d)re sua di Re / R ... Di
quel ...**

If compared with the oracle of the Libyan Sibyl of the Roman Orsini Palace as found in the Olomouc MS. we find:

**Ecce veniet et illuminabit Dominus condensa tenebrarum et solvitur nexus
synagogae et desinent labia hominum et videbunt Regem erit et tenebit
illum in gremio virgo domina gencium et regnabit in misericordia et uterus
matris eius erit statera cunctorum.**

²³¹ J. M. Zucker, *Early Italian Masters, The Illustrated Bartsch*, 24, New York, 1980, p. 274; c.f. the same author, *Early Italian Masters. Baccio Baldini Commentary*, I, *The Illustrated Bartsch*, 24, New York, 1993, pp. 159-163, 199-216.

²³² MS. 1271 [XV Century], vide 70v – 71v, “forteça”, c. 70v, c.f. S Ferri, “La Sibilla” in *Annali della Regia Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, 1915, pp. 104-105.

²³³ Cornagliotti, pp. 22, 20.

Casa Romei: Sibillae Delphica and Cimmeria



Behold! God will come and pierce the dense gloom with light and break the bond, Oh Synagogue, and the lips of men shall be shut and they will see he will be King, welling in a virgin's womb who is the Queen of all mankind. He will reign in mercy and his mother's womb will be the measure [literally, 'balance' or 'yoke-pole'] of all things.

The lexical correspondences with the vernacular tradition are not many that are significant, and among the divers details is, in the occurrences noted by me, the translation of "*condensa tenebrarum*". Thus in the manuscript of the Biblioteca Riccardiana of Florence, we find *signore* and *folte tenebre*.²³⁴ In Baldini's engravings we find the Libyan Sibyl saying '*signiore*', '*chose naschose*', and '*re*'. In the oracle of the Sibilla Samia, which is also that of the Sibilla Libica, we find, '*tenebre serrate*' and '*re*'.²³⁵ In the prophecy that the Samia recites in Belcari's *Annunciation*, which is the oracle of the Libia, we find '*tenebre serrate*', and '*re*'.²³⁶ The Libyan Sibyl in the Bologna Mystery Play says, '*cose tenebrose*' and '*Signore*'.²³⁷ Lastly we encounter in *Prologue A* of the *Revello Passion*, '*gran tenebra*' '*re*' and '*vergene*' (in the words of the angel to the Sibyl) and '*Signor*', '*tenebre tute*', '*re*', and '*vergene*' (in the words of the Libyan Sibyl). In *Prologue B* we find, '*tenebria*', '*re*', and '*vergene*' (in the mouth of the Angel), and '*Signore*', and again, '*tenebre tute*', '*re*' and '*vergeneta*' (spoken by the Sibyl).²³⁸

3: DELFICA

We can only identify the Casa Romei Delphica hypothetically, there being no label, basing our judgement on the order of the Cardinal's Sibyls. [See picture opposite]

²³⁴ MS 1271 [XV Century] the oracle of the Libyan Sibyl, c. 70v

²³⁵ Zucker, pp. 275, 281

²³⁶ Banfi, p. 75.

²³⁷ De Bartholomaeis, p. 215.

²³⁸ A. Cornagliotti, *La Passione di Revello*, (Turin: [n. pub.], 1976) pp. 18, 22, 16, 21.



Casa Romei: Sibilla Eritrea: severe damage from damp is seen at the base of the fresco

...regiro adi...ni pre...ile... / ... D... / ... v(er)zene ...a.

The only traceable similarity to the oracle of the Palazzo Orsini is not very significant:

Olomouc

Nasci debere propheta absque matris coitu ex virgine alvo.

I have been born to be a prophet without maternal coitus, from a virgin womb.

Tongerlo

Nasci debere prophetam absque maris coitu de virgine eius.

I have been born to be a prophet from a virgin conceiving without coitus with her husband.

Edinburgh

Nasci debere prophetam absque maris coitu et matre virgine.

I have been born to be a prophet without coitus with a husband, both virgin and mother.

(Later scribes have assumed that 'et' should read 'ex' in the Edinburgh MS. which would make sense, although the text itself is quite clear.)

4: CIMMERIA:

The next prophetess placed to the right of the chimney piece must be the Cimmerian Sibyl, the fourth Sibyl of the Palazzo Orsini cycle, always assuming that the placing of the prophetesses of the Casa Romei corresponds to that of Rome. All the named Sibyls do, so the presumption is strong. Of her oracle, one can read nothing.

5: ERITREA:

It is almost impossible to read the scroll of the first Sibyl on the following wall; the last three letters can no longer be read. . [See picture opposite]

“ ... / ...o... / ... cta.



Casa Romei: Sibilla Samia: damp has discoloured the base of the fresco

However, she can be identified with the Sibylla Erythraea, the fifth Roman prophetess, if the order corresponds to that of the Palazzo Orsini cycle

6: SAMIA

The next Sibyl is next to the niche with the Nativity. From what we read on her scroll we can recognise her as the sixth prophetess of the Cardinal's series: [See picture opposite]

Ecco **che** ... diuo ...[p]love[r]ella ...[n]ascerà (et) **ia** ieo ... d(e)lat(er)ra / Ro...
chi ... [e]lla et **ador** ... io ...t(er)ra / Et ...no... **e... d ... laud...** suo ...sm... s(
)**ma** dice²³⁹

Compare this writing with the oracle of the Orsini cycle:

Olomouc

**Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de paupercula et bestie terarum adorabunt eum
clamabunt et dicent, laudate eum in astris celorum.**

*Behold, God will come to be born of a poor woman, and the wild beasts of the
earth shall adore him and shall cry aloud, and say, 'Praise him to the stars of
Heaven'.*

Tongerlo

**Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de paupercula et bestie terrarum adorabunt
eum clamabunt et dicent laudate eum in astris celorum.**

Edinburgh

**Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de paupercula et bestie terrarum adorabunt
eum et clamabunt et dicent: Laudate eum in stellis celorum.**

(Note the different word for 'stars', stellis not astris.)

²³⁹ Towards the end of the oracle, it seems to me possible to transcribe 'laud' in place of the 'tan' suggested by Gagliardo.



Casa Romei: Sibilla Cumana

Gagliardo observes that uniquely, little significant parallelism with the vernacular tradition is found in the codex of the Biblioteca Riccardiana previously cited.²⁴⁰ Samia speaks the words *Ecco, adoreranno, vide. 71r*. In the two last verses pronounced by the Sibylla Cumana in the play of the *Annunciation* by Feo Belcari (which, in fact, correspond to part of the oracle of the Samia) we find *poverella*, and *adorato*.²⁴¹ In the cycle of Sibyls belonging to the *Sacra Rappresentazione* of Bologna, we find in the prophecy of the Samian Sibyl, the word, *adorarano*.²⁴² In the *Passione* of Revello, in Prologue A, the Angel, speaking to the Sibylla Samia, uses the words, *poverella*, and *adorato*, and in the same Prologue, the Sibylla Samia uses the words *poverella* and *adorato*. In Prologue B, the Angel talking to the Sibylla Samia uses the words *poverella*, and *adorato*, and in the same prologue, the Sibylla Samia uses these words, *poverella* and *adorato*.²⁴³

7: CUMANA

After the niche, a prophetess without much remaining scroll or face must be the Cuman Sibyl, the seventh Sibyl of the Roman cycle, always assuming the Ferrara order to be the same as that of Cardinal Orsini. There is little trace of the scroll and no writing remains.
[See picture opposite]

8: ELLESPONTICA

The first Sibyl of the next wall bears a very few traces of the inscription on the scroll:

... / ... io... / yhm ...

It is only by means of considering the order in which the Sibyls are presented that we can identify her with the Hellespontica, eighth among the Sibyls of the Palazzo Orsini.

²⁴⁰ Gagliardo, p. 45 f.n. 38.

²⁴¹ See Banfi, p. 80.

²⁴² See De Bartholomaeis, p. 214.

²⁴³ See Cornagliotti, pp. 20, 26, 18, 23.

Casa Romei: Sibillae Hellespontica, Frigia and Tiburtina



9: FRIGIA

We recognise the Sibylla Frigia, the ninth of the Orsini cycle, from a single significant word from her prophecy:

...ie...le... potenti d(el)la ...o... / ...h ...b... / ...a...

Compare this with the Roman version:

Olomouc

**Flagellabit deus potentes terre et Olimpo excelsus veniet et fremabitur
concilium in cello et anuntiabitur virgo in celo et anuntiabitur virgo.²⁴⁴**

Almighty God shall chastise the kings of the earth. From highest Heaven he will come, the Court of Heaven will judge and a virgin will be proclaimed in the desert valleys.

Tongerlo

**Flagellabit deus potentes terre ex olimpo excelsus veniet et firmabitur
concilium in celo et annunciabitur virgo in vallibus desertorum.**

Almighty God shall chastise the kings of the earth. From highest Heaven he will come, the Court of Heaven will judge and a virgin will be proclaimed in the desert valleys.

Edinburgh

Flagellabit deus potentes terre et olimpo excelsus veniet et firmabitur consilium
in caelo et annuntiatur virgo in vallibus desertorum.

10: TIBURTINA

The tenth Sibyl, following the order of the Palazzo Orsini, would be the Tiburtina.
:[See picture opposite] (Nothing is reconstructable from the faint traces on the scroll, unless

²⁴⁴ *et* is almost certainly a scribal error for *ex*.

Casa Romei: Sibillae Europa and Agrippa



patce can be interpreted as a local spelling of *pace*, in which case we have a one-word match and the oracle may be part of the Orsini canon.

...O()...u ...ro...patce...m ... / ...h ... / ... (con)la...d ...²⁴⁵

Olomouc

Nascetur prophetum in Bethlehem et anuntiabitur in Nazareth regente tauro pacifico, fundatore quietis. O felix illa mater cuius ubera illum lactabunt.

Christ shall be born a prophet in Bethlehem and he shall be announced in Nazareth, the peaceful Taurus king, founder of rest, being in the ascendant. Oh happy mother whose breast shall suckle him.

11: EUROPA

The last two prophetesses, including the next one, Europa, are on the same wall as the entrance door, where we started. The first two prophetesses are on the other side of that door.: [See picture opposite]

Vegne[r]à q(ue)l[l]o: (et) pas[(er)à] calli (et) mo[(n)]ti et laq(ua) delcielo! (et) i(n) g(ra)n pov(er)tade / [R]er(ne)r à ! (et) dio (et) h(om)o ...a oço...a . domi(ne)rà jn Scilen(tio) (in)g(ra)n bontade / ...te demostro... / Vel predico ca dal v(er)zinal chios[tro] ... [vegne]rà fuori (con)diuinitade.²⁴⁶

The Sibylla Europa is recognisable by comparing the oracle with that of the descriptions of the Roman cycle:

²⁴⁵ At the end of the prophecy, it seems to me that it is now possible to transcribe, '(con)la' in place of 'oda'. As transcribed by Gagliardo, p. 26.

²⁴⁶ It seems to me, now, that, "q(ue)l[l]o," "calli," and "mo[(n)]ti" are not very different. See Gagliardo, p. 25.

Olomouc

Veniet ille et transibit colles et montes et latices olimpi regnabit in paupertate et dominabitur in silencio et egredietur de utero virginis.

He will come and will cross valleys, mountains and Olympian heights. He will reign in poverty and will himself be governed remaining silent, being born of a virgin's womb.

Tongerlo

Veniet ille et transibit colles et montes et latices olimpi, regnabit in paupertate et dominabitur in silencio at egredietur de utero virginis.

He will come and will cross valleys, mountains and the waters of heaven. He will rule in poverty, governing silently, being born of a virgin's womb.

Edinburgh

Veniet ille et transibit colles et montes **ex** latices olimpi **et** regnabit in paupertate et dominabitur in silencio et egredietur de utero virginis.

The adjective „*gran*” is interesting in the vernacular tradition. Although there is no corresponding Latin word in the oracle of the Orsini Palace, it is however, present at the Casa Romei.. It is placed before the noun, *poverta* in the prophecy that the Sibylla Europa recites, after the, *incipit* of the Latin prophecy, in the engravings of Baccio Baldini.²⁴⁷ However, the whole text of the engraving is found in a position which seems to be further on than the position that the same words have in the Latin prophecy translated more faithfully in the scroll of the Casa Romei. Furthermore, Christ is referred to, as in our oracle, as, *ed uomo ed dio*, an epithet perhaps deriving from a partial quotation from an Italian prophecy of the thirteenth century and which, however, is not found in the Orsini oracle.²⁴⁸ The words in the

²⁴⁷ See Zucker, *op. cit.* 1980, p. 284.

²⁴⁸ See Gagliardo, *Le Sibille nel giardino*, previously cited, p. 19 f.n. 71

Baldini engravings, adjectives “*gran*” and “*tanta*” before the nouns, “*bontade*” and “*poverta*” respectively, are also found in the Bologna Cycle of plays, but in positions and combinations in which the sense is very slightly altered (Even though transposed, they remain).²⁴⁹ Points of comparison are also found in some of the verses directed by the Angel Raphael to the Sibylla Europa in the Prologues A and B of the Revello *Passione*. Prologue A: *Vegnirà el Signore chi passerà li colli, / li monti at tuti gly altri loghi molli. / Regnerà poy cum granda povertate, / dominerà in silencio et in veritate*. Prologue B: *Vegnirà el Signore che passerà y colli, / li monti et tuti li altri loghi molli. / Regnerà poy cum gran povertate, / dominerà in silencio et in veritate*. To a lesser extent, comparisons are found in the words of the same prophetess in Prologue A *ly monti et ly colli ancora dé passare / et tute l'acque; poy debe regnare / cum silencio et cum granda povertate*.²⁵⁰ We find a few comparisons in the oracle of the Sibylla Europa of the *Memorie*, by Merenda: *venirà quello et I cieli passa[r]à et regnarà in povertà*.²⁵¹

12: AGRIPPA

The procession of Sibyls ends with the next figure, the twelfth Sibyl. The Sibylla Agrippa is recognised from the words of her prophecy, which corresponds in part to that of the oracle recited by the same prophetess at the Orsini Palace:

...al...lo...Y... Y... come radice / ... rod . o . lom...oe...acorse dice: /
 ...m(en)to...o... / ...l...n... / ...le...a...o... / ... / [n]ascerà ...e (con)ue[r]serà
 come] peccatore,

Olomouc

**Invisibile verbum palpabitur et germinabit ut radix et siccabit ut folium et
 non apparebit venustas eius et circumdabitur alvus maternus et flebit deus**

²⁴⁹ See De Bartholomaeis, p. 216.

²⁵⁰ See Cornagliotti, pp. 19, 16, 20.

²⁵¹ Merenda, 2v.

letitia sempiterna et ab hominibus conculcabitur et nascetur ex matre ut deus et conversabitur ut peccator.

The universal word will be made flesh and though he will spring as from the root, he will be withered like a leaf and will not appear beautiful. His mother's womb will confine Him. God, the eternal joy, will weep, despised of men. He will be born from his mother as God, that the sinner may be converted.

Tongerlo

Indivisible verbum palpabitur et germinabit ut radix et siccabitur ut folium et non apparebit venustas eius et circumdabit illum alvus maternus et flebit deus letitia sempiterna et ab hominibus conculcabitur et nascetur ex matre ut deus et conversabitur ut peccator.

Edinburgh

In the Edinburgh manuscript she is called 'Sibilla Egiptia'.

Invisible verbum palpabitur et germinabit ut radix et secabitur ut folium non apparebit vetustas alius materna et flebit deus Letitia sempiterna et ab hominibus conculcabitur et nascetur ex matre ut deus et conversabitur ut peccator.²⁵²

('et circumdabit illum alvus', is missing from the Edinburgh manuscript) The Edinburgh manuscript therefore reads:

The universal word will be made flesh and though he will spring as from the root, he will be withered like a leaf and will not appear aged. He will weep, despised of men. He will be born from his mother as God so that the sinner may be converted.

²⁵² These differences are surely the result of a clerical error; 'venustas' makes much more sense in context than 'vetustas', as does 'alvus maternus' rather than 'alius materna'.

Correspondences with the vernacular tradition are found in the verses pronounced by the Sibylla Tiburtina (which are in reality those of the Agrippa) in the *Annunciazione* by Feo Belcari.²⁵³ The same (not particularly significant) tradition of *'ut radix'*, ('come radice') and of *'nascetur'* ('nascerà') is found, but together with differences at the end of the prophecy and with diversity in the total length of the text. That tradition in the oracle of the Casa Romei is, to judge from what can be seen, more faithful to the presumed Latin font. *'Nascerà'* is found again in the prophecy of *'Egizia'*, ('Egyptia') partner of Agrippa in the *Rappresenmtazione* play cycle of Bologna.²⁵⁴ Also, in this case, more than the various divergences, the length of the octave does not seem to correspond to that of our text, and the translation appears, to judge from the last words, less faithful to the probable original. We also encounter the same Latinism, *'converserà'*. Again in, *'[n]ascerà'*, and in the Latinism, *'(con)ve[rserà]*, we find a corresponding, *'Nascerà'*, and *'converserà'* in the verses that the *'Angelus Raphael'* addresses to the Sibylla Agrippa in the *Prologue A* of the *Passione* of Revello, although the rest be different and also the translation seems less faithful here.²⁵⁵

Much of what has been written here in relation to text is conjectural, since the inscriptions on the scrolls of the Sibyls is vitiated and their names are obliterated. However, there is no single piece of text remaining that can be seen to contradict the supposition that these Sibyls have been painted in the Orisni order, or that their oracles were direct vernacular translations of the Orsini Latin Text.

THE COSTUME OF THE SIBYLS AT THE CASA ROMEI

Gagliardo assumes that the order of the Sibyls here is the same as that of the Camera Paramenti in Rome and, since this seems to be supported by the remaining fragments of text, it is on that basis that I give names to the pictures.

²⁵³ Banfi, *op. cit.* p. 82.

²⁵⁴ De Bartholomaeis, *'Laude'*, p. 216.

²⁵⁵ Cornagliotti, p. 19.

As in the fresco at San Vito al Tagliamento, the Sibyls wear the expensive court dress of the time. However, there is an important additional factor. This is the first extant fresco where some attempt is made to differentiate the appearance of the individual Sibyls by giving them markedly different ages and some eccentric details of dress, presumably governed by some notions of their origin. There is no evidence that much work has yet been done by Humanists on the Classical origins and appearance of the Sibyls. Such differentiation as there is, is probably garnered from folk-tale in which there is an inherent muddling of sources and origins, but which reflects the oral traditions of the region. The Sibilla Libica here, is, for example, a demure young Italian *funciulla*, with no trace of black skin, snakes or tripod. The Sibyls do not carry particular attributes, horns, burning books and the like. This is early in the Renaissance and early in the developing iconographic tradition of the Sibyls. The hunt for texts and the recovery of Greek and Latin secular writings is just beginning.

Nonetheless, there is evidence here of some features of age and appearance that later become accepted norms in the rendering of the individual Sibyls. There are three features here that give individuality to the figures of the Sibyls. One is that one of them is rendered as an aged woman, leaning on a stick, not the standard attractive young girl. If Cornagliotti is right, this is the Sibilla Delphica.²⁵⁶ The image of the aged woman was, in later frescos, applied to the Sibyl of Cumae, when the story of her inability to die became more widely known from Classical literature. The second distinguishing feature is that the Sibilla Samia sports a crown or mitre with a crown. This may be an influence from the Sibyls of Cortina, or a confusion of the Samian Sibyl with the Queen of Sheba, a Mediaeval confusion.²⁵⁷ Here, for the first time, we see an attempt to confer individuality.

²⁵⁶ A. Cornagliotti, p. 22

²⁵⁷ Sometimes portrayed thus in earlier iconography, as for example in the fresco in Cortina di Ampezzo, painted in 1400.

The third instance of individuality does not readily strike the observer unless she be acquainted with the later cycles. It is at this point that we first encounter the iconographic muddle, to be discussed at length in relation to the Sibyls of Siena. The confusion is between the Sibylla Cumaea or 'Cimmerian' Sibyl (Virgil's Sibyl who runs mad in the cave) and the Sibilla Cumana, the Sibyl of very early Italic folklore who burned her prophetic books before Tarquin. The Sibilla Cumana is here presented in a pose that is strikingly like that of the later Sibilla Cumaea at Siena. I think this is an early instance in muddled identity, if indeed she bore the name of Cumana here. The rest of these Sibyls are very static, commensurate with their dignity, but here, the whole body leans forward in an attitude of movement. The scroll streams out behind her, adding to the effect of forward motion just ended. Her hand rests over her heart on her breast, reminiscent of Virgil's words in *Aeneid* VI 77-80:

At, Phoebi nondum patiens, immanis in antro

bacchatur vates, magnum si pectore possit

excisuisse deum: tanto magis ille fatigat

os rabidum, fera corda domans, fingitque premendo.

Meanwhile, not yet enduring possession by Apollo, the prophetess ran wildly about the cave like a frightful Bacchante, much in the hope to have shaken off the possession of the God from her breast. Yet the more she raves the more he exhausts her foaming mouth, overcoming her wild heart and shaping her to his strong control. She is like a horse, controlled by the cruel pain of bit and goad.

Note also *Aeneid* VI 100-101.

ea frena furenti / concutit et stimulus sub pectore vertit Apollo.

Apollo furiously jerks the bit and turns the goad to pierce her breast.

She displays what becomes the characteristic body posture of the Sibylla Cumaea, a woman in movement, causing her scroll to move as she moves. This can be seen most



Casa Romei: the Cimmerian Sibyl



1481: Filippo Barbieri: woodcut: the Cimmerian Sibyl

vividly by comparing this picture with the renderings of the Cumaea, much later in the Barbieri woodcuts of 1481. [See picture opposite.]

If this rendering of active movement takes its origin from Ferrara, and not from the lost frescos of Rome or San Vito, it must be remembered that it may not be directly from the bourgeois Casa Romei, but from the Princely room in Belriguardo.

The Renaissance Cycles we have so far examined have all been influenced by the Orsini model as to location, text and artistic rendering. The Orsini Sibyls do not appear in public buildings or churches, only in the private apartments in the palaces of aristocratic Humanists, and in this one aspirant bourgeois house. The text remains that of the original Orsini Cycle, or the written document that was its source. The Sibyls have all been full standing figures, near life-size. There is, as we have seen, only limited attempt to give them individual character. Apart from one or two elderly women, they are simply attractive women in the expensive fashions of the day. The wall on which the Casa Romei Sibyls are painted has three horizontal sections. They stand in the middle section above a dado that often surmounts decorative geometric patterns. Above the Sibyls is a section often adorned with decorated panels.

c. 1463: ALBENGA: THE BISHOP'S PALACE

In 1418, a disastrous fire raged through the mediaeval Bishop's palace at Albenga.²⁵⁸ It remained in a damaged, unsatisfactory state and needed complete redesign and

²⁵⁸ In this chronological study, we have not yet examined the Sibyl room in the Bishop's Palace at Albenga (1453), made with the encouragement of the Orsini patron of the Bishopric, about thirteen years after the Casa Romei. It is exactly consonant with Orsini style: a private apartment with near life-size figures in the fashions of the day, displaying the canonical text and standing above a dado with a geometric pattern below it. Above them are painted panels. Since it is an Orsini Cycle, it is more logical, as well as convenient for the reader, to discuss Albenga here, together with the early



Albenga: The Bishop's Bedroom: Frieze showing alternating Orsini and Fieschi shields



Albenga: The same room showing a slightly earlier pattern of faux tapestry

refurbishment. Bishop Napoleone Fieschi and his friend, Cardinal Latino Orsini, addressed themselves to this task, forty-five years later. What remains of their new room of the Sibyls in Albenga is, as far as I am aware, the last surviving, and possibly the last, Orsini fresco.

Social and Cultural Background

Like all the other Orsini frescos, its location is not ecclesiastical but domestic. It belongs to the set of semi-private rooms in Bishop Napoleone Fieschi's palace. The Room of the Sibyls is today described as his Chapel. Perhaps the reason for this is that it has a devotional niche to the Virgin and Child set into the centre of one of the two shorter walls, providing a focus for devotions. However, the Room of the Sibyls at the Casa Romei, Ferrara, apparently based on the Orsini plan, had just such a niche. This was not intended as a chapel but is described as a study, like the destroyed *Studiolo* at Belriguardo on which it was probably modelled. It was made for Romei's wife, and set next to another room, perhaps for himself, decorated with male Hebrew prophets. A niche celebrating Our Lady and the feminine aspects of Christian theology seems appropriately placed with the female prophets of the birth of Christ. It does not imply that the room was a chapel.

I think this Albenga room is likely also to have been a study, where morning meetings with the Bishop could appropriately take place. This would mirror courtly practice elsewhere. Audiences for the privileged few, the inner circle of intimates, could conventionally be held in bedrooms, but for other important functionaries, the adjacent room was the normal meeting place. In the manners of the time, one could gauge one's degree of intimacy, influence and importance, by how near to a great man's bedroom one was allowed to progress. It appears that the degree of influence and intimacy between Bishop Fieschi and his patron, Cardinal Latino Orsini, was particularly close. Their twin shields nestle together round the frieze at the top of the bedroom wall. [See pictures opposite] However that may be,

Orsini cycles that initiated the genre, even though that marks a slight departure from the strict chronological order in general adopted by this dissertation.

both bedroom and the Room of the Sibyls next to it were designed and executed together, to celebrate and publicise close association between Bishop Fieschi and Cardinal Orsini. This is recorded on the outside of the building in a fresco composed of shields: those of the Catholic Church with the crossed keys of St Peter with the shields of Latino Orsini and Napoleone Fieschi below it. Underneath, the inscription gives us the date of the building works:

*Hoc opus fecit D(ominus) N(apoleone) de Flisco anno 1463 die 4 maij.*²⁵⁹

At Albenga in 1463, the redecoration, including the Room of the Sibyls was made in the last years of the great Humanist Pope, Pius II, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (1458-64), the selection of the papal name was perhaps a Renaissance reference to Virgil's 'Pius Aeneas'. Pius Aeneas Piccolomini was on a spiritual journey in search of his cultural homeland in his country's Classical past. There would, at that time have been no papal opposition to the pursuit of learning and the exploration of somewhat arcane texts, symbolised by the Sibyls. Some few years later the notorious and far from innocent, local Cardinal Giovanni Battista Cibo, became Pope Innocent VIII (1484-92) and was famously anti-Humanist. Possibly the genre of Sibyl Rooms in private palaces came to an end at that time.²⁶⁰

It may be that at Albenga, Fieschi and Latino Orsini are not so much in the vanguard of scholarly Humanism, but simply following the Orsini formula for constructing Sibyl Rooms: two aesthetes making a fashion statement derivative of past Orsini familial glory, rather than a cultural intervention.

The Artistic Form

The surviving Sibyl fresco here is nonetheless an important example of the Orsini form. The Sibyls that have survived occupy two of the walls.²⁶¹ They are without attributes

²⁵⁹ These works were done by Lord Napoleone Fieschi in the year 1463, on 4 May.

²⁶⁰ After this all other cycles are in Churches where the religious text is paramount and the figures are reduced to half-figures or diminished to head and shoulders.

²⁶¹ See Gagliardo, p. 23 and note 8 (with bibliography). See my translation of this work, p.7. fn 15.

ORSINI STYLE AT ALBENGA



Albenga: The Orsini Style: Life-sized Sibyl with a geometric pattern below and decorative panels above: much like the Casa Romei in Ferrara and the Sibyls of San Vito

and are disposed in a different order from that of the original Roman cycle. The room is of the familiar tri-partite Orsini form: [See picture opposite] geometric patterns below a dado, above which are near life-size Sibyls. This is a very high, vaulted room, the mediaeval roof having survived the fire. Where a two-feet-wide frieze would normally be in Orsini rooms, other frescos fill the space up to the high vaults. These tell the story of the revelation. On the ceiling itself, Hebrew Prophets are depicted.

The frescoes on the lower part of the wall, below the trompe l'oeil dado, are geometric patterns that play with perspective and its effect on the human eye and brain, in accordance with the contemporary Renaissance experiments with optics. Beneath the Virgin and Christ Child niche however, is a painted a damask tapestry, as though an altar-hanging.

The Sibyls painted above the dado rail have a millefleurs background, mostly destroyed. This strikes me as a rendering of an expensive French millefleurs tapestry, but could perhaps be interpreted as a garden. One must remember that the famous room in the Orsini Palace was called the *Camera dei Paramenti*, or Room of the Tapestries.

The wall into which the entrance door is set is completely blank. If there were frescos, they are now obscured or lost and the wall is white. On the next wall, on one's left as one enters, from the Bishops bedroom, four Sibyls remain. I will refer to these by number, starting with the Sibyl to the left as you face the wall. This is simply for convenient identification. I do not imply that the first remaining Sibyl was intended as the first of the original cycle. If the pattern at the Casa Romei is followed, it is much more likely that there were Sibyls all round the room and that the series started just to the left of the entrance door. The first two remaining Sibyls are severely damaged, but the scrolls remain. Some few words remain on the second Sibyl's scroll. Working from the available manuscripts, the name and original full inscription can be ascertained.

Albenga: detail: Sibyl I: head and ghost title.



TEXT

SIBYL 1

[See picture opposite] The name of this Sibyl was inscribed on the wall on either side of her head, which remains. It is possible to descry the word, 'Sibil', on the space level with and to the left of her face. However, whilst the paint is missing, one can see that there is a 'ghost mark' of her individual name on the other side. I did not find it possible to descry individual letters with any certainty. There are traces of black lettering on her scroll but none of this is readable. The Sibyl wears a green damask gown, of contemporary fifteenth-century style. No attempt is made to suggest Classical origin in her mode of dress. The neck has a revered collar, faced in gold material. She wears a crown.

SIBYL 2: SIBILLA CUMANA

[See picture overleaf] The middle or waist portion of this Sibyl's body, with two arms is all that remains. However, her scroll remains with some legible letters in its text. She wears a gold gown with wide sleeves with turned back cuffs, faced with a muted red material with a darker V shaped pattern on them. There are sufficient words left legible to realise that the text on the scroll reads:

Magnus ab integro seculorum nascitur (ordo) (The last word is absent:
plaster here is missing.

Iam redit et virgo, redeunt saturna regna

jam nova progenies e cello dimittitur alto.

These are lines 6-8 of Virgil's *Eclogue IV*.

The great succession of Ages is born again from the beginning,

Now also, the Virgin returns, and the rule of Saturn comes again,

Now a new progeny descends from high Heaven.

This is the conventional Orsini canonical quotation for the Cumana.



Albenga: Sibyls 1 and 2



Albenga: Detail: the second Sibyl's scroll.

ALBENGA NICHE

Albenga: Niche to Our Lady and the Infant Jesus



SIBYLS IN THE DEVOTIONAL NICHE TO OUR LADY AND THE INFANT JESUS

After Sibyl 2, there is a niche in which there is a picture of the Blessed Virgin enthroned between two saints, with the infant Jesus on her lap. The Saint on the right appears to be St Michael, winged and with a sword. On the 'side walls' of the niche, there are Sibyls, one on either side. [See picture opposite.]

SIBYL 3: SIBILLA SAMIA

At the left is a Sibyl described by previous scholarship and the museum itself, as the Sibylla Lybica.²⁶² I am quite sure that this is an error, but a scholarly error. What it actually says on the fresco is, 'Sibylla Samia'. The initial 's' however, looks like a lower case 'l', which would give the word, 'Lamia'. This scribe represents capital 's' with a straight downward stroke, like a modern 'l', as can be established by looking at the 's' in 'Sibilla', the previous word. [See pictures overleaf.] 'Lamia' has been read as a synonym for 'Lybica' because in Euripides' Satyr play *Busiris*, the frightening witch, Lamia, who steals babies, comes out of the ground and announces that she is the mother of the Sibyl of Libya.²⁶³ This is substantially the same Sibyl.

There is further confusion in that the Sibilla Lybica's oracle in the Orsini canon starts with nearly the same words as the Samian Sibyl's oracle, 'Ecce veniet dies, et ...'; however, the Samian Sibyl's oracle reads, 'Ecce veniet dives, et ...' and they then diverge.

Sibilla Libica Canonical Text (Revello MS.):

**Ecce veniet dies et illuminabit dominus condempsa (sic) tenebrarum, / et
solvetur nexus synagoge. / Et desinent labia hominum et videbunt regem**

²⁶² For other information on Albenga and its context see Nino Lamboglia, *Albenga Romano e Medioevale* (Albenga: Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri, 1992).

²⁶³ Preserved in A Nauck, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (2nd edn, 1889), p. 506. See also Parke, p. 122 n9.



Albenga: Sibilla Samia



Albenga: Detail showing Sibyl's name above top frame of picture

viventium. Et tenebit illum in gremio virgo domina gentium / et regnabit in misericordia / et uterus matris eius erit statera cunctorum. (*sic*)

The Sibilla Samia Canonical Text:

The manuscript sources are as follows:

Olomouc

Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de paup(er)cula et bestie terrarum adorabunt eum clamabunt et dicent, laudate eum in **astris** celorum.

Behold, he who is rich will come to be born of a poor woman, and the wild beasts of all lands shall adore him and shall cry aloud, and say, 'Praise him to the starry heavens'.

Tongerlo

Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de paupercula et bestie terrarum adorabunt eum clamabunt et dicent laudate eum in astris celorum.

Edinburgh

Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de paupercula et bestie terrarum adorabunt eum et clamabunt et dicent: Laudate eum in stellis celorum.

The Albenga version reads:

Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de paupercula, / (et concealed under arm) bestie terrarum adorabunt eum, / clamabunt et dicent: laudate dominum in **atriis** celorum.

Behold, he who is rich will come to be born of a poor woman, and the wild beasts of the earth shall adore him and shall cry aloud, and say, 'Praise him in the Courts of Heaven'.

(*Atriis*, courts, may be a scribal error for *astris*, stars, found in the Olomouc and Tongerlo manuscripts. Edinburgh records *stellis*, stars.)



Albenga: Sibyl 4: Sibilla Persica

This Albenga oracle can be read perfectly clearly, so it is possible to be sure that it is the same quotation as that given to the Sibilla Samia on Cardinal Giordano Orsini's original wall in Rome. This adds weight to the identification as the 'Samia'.

SIBYL 4: SIBILLA PERSICA

[See picture opposite] Each of the two Sibyls in the niche has her name written above her picture. The Sibyl on the other side of the niche is the Sibilla Persica. Her vaticination also accords with the original Orsini wall in Rome and with what remains of the vernacular inscription at the Casa Romei.

**Ecce bestia conculcaberis et gignetur Dominus in orbe terrarum et
gremium virginis erit salus gentium et pedes eius in validudine hominum.**

*Behold, He will tread down the beasts, and all growing things, Lord of all the
kingdoms of the world in the lap of a virgin, he will be the saviour of mankind
and his feet bring the health of men.*

These Sibyls may have been better preserved than the Sibyls in the rest of the room on the plain faces of the walls since they are in the niche, which has probably never been painted over, whatever may have happened to the other surfaces of the walls. The other figures are much destroyed, and it is not possible to be sure of either their names. Nothing else in the texts is readable.

The figures are wearing fifteenth-century, upper-class dress, with no extremes of fashion. The colours of their garments, green and yellow, for Lamia and Persica respectively, find some echo in the clothes painted earlier at the Casa Romei. The clothes in the earlier cycle are painted with far more detail and complexity, but the Libica wears a green damask over-dress, a *tavardete*, or tabard, and the Persica has a cream gown and cloak trimmed with yellow.



Albenga: General view of the second of the two painted walls: Sibyls 5 and 6



Albenga: Sibyl 5

SIBYL 5

Most of the fresco on the centre part of the next wall is lost. [See general view opposite] However, to left and right, the heads and substantial parts of the bodies of two Sibyls remain. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to identify them with certainty and their scrolls are indecipherable. Between these two at the left and right margins of the wall are the remains of the lower portion of one other, clearly seen wearing a yellow dress and carrying a scroll, now blank. There is room for at least one other.

This Sibyl is to the left of the wall. She wears a muted red gown under a yellow cloak, lined in the same red material. The simple hood of the cloak covers her head, rather in the manner of a nun's hood.

The last two or three Sibyls are to the right of the centre of the wall. Most of the plaster is missing from the centre of this wall.

SIBYL 6

Only her lap and legs remain with substantial parts of her scroll, which, alas, has no decipherable text. Her skirt is yellow, whilst the top of her gown is the muted red used elsewhere on the clothes of the Sibyls in this room.

SIBYL 7

[See picture overleaf] This Sibyl is at the extreme right of this wall. She is an attractive young girl with blonde hair in plaits wound round her head. She wears a muted red, close-fitting gown on her trim figure. It is possible that there is an angel or another Sibyl entirely clad in white to her right but the fresco is so damaged that one cannot be sure. This implies that two walls account for at least eight Sibyls. There are traces of a name but unfortunately it is indecipherable.



Albenga: Sibyl 7



Albenga: Orsini tripartite wall design in the Bishop's Bedroom

The Orsini Connection expressed in the Decoration of the Bishop's Bedroom

The Bishop's bedroom is next to the room of the Sibyls. It is the familiar tripartite pattern of dado, main wall decoration and a surmounting frieze next to the ceiling. Instead of Sibyls in this room, the largest section is decorated with trompe l'oeil hanging 'tapestries', very French looking, with millefleurs and charming animals thereon. Above these, are paired shields. One has white and blue diagonal stripes, descending from left to right and is the personal stemma of Bishop Napoleone Fieschi, for whom the room was decorated. The other is the armorial shield of Cardinal Latino Orsini, the lower half of which is similarly banded, but in red and white. He is referred to in the notes provided in this room as, *un protettore romana della diocesi di Inguana* (A Roman protector of the Diocese of Albenga). , [See picture opposite]

The frescos are attributed to the *bottega* of the 'Maestro di Lucerna'. This may mean a connection between the decoration of these rooms and the Sibyl Cycle at Lucerna. The employment of the Maestro of Lucerna here may indicate that the Sibyl Cycle at Lucerna was painted shortly before this. The Cycle there might have brought the artist some celebrity, which resulted in a commission here, for the pair of private rooms, study and bedroom, containing another cycle of Sibyls. If that is true, as seems likely, it is helpful in establishing a more exact date for Lucerna.

BEFORE 1489: CARPI

Il Palazzo di Taliano Delci Pio: 'The Room of the Sibyls'

Not now extant, this was constructed before 1489 in d'Este territory, by Prospero Donati da Corregio. It was discovered and destroyed in the 1850s. We can, however, regard the room at Albenga as the last great Orsini Room of the Sibyls. There remains only a fragment at Carpi, preserved in the Civic Museum, but enough to show that the Sibyls did not have a really significant visual impact in this room. The remaining fragment is the blonde head of a prophetess, only about twelve centimetres in height, so it is clear that the



Piani Imperia: right hand corner of atrium: detail showing typical Orsini structure

figures were small. In the scant photographic documentation, there is enough to make out that there were several Sibyls, as testified by the name of the room, if not all twelve. The Sibyls were drawn standing with scrolls on which their oracles were inscribed, surrounded by various kinds of vegetation and perhaps surmounted by garlands similar to those at the Casa Romei at Ferrara. What else besides the Sibyls was represented in this room is not clear.

Carpi is just north of Modena and thus in the fiefdom of the d'Estes of Ferrara, who ruled as overlords from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century, even though they had lost Ferrara by the end of the sixteenth century. The appearance of a Sibyl Cycle here can thus be understood as part of the D'Este Humanist court taste, influenced by previous cycles in Ferrara, and through those, by the Orsini mode.

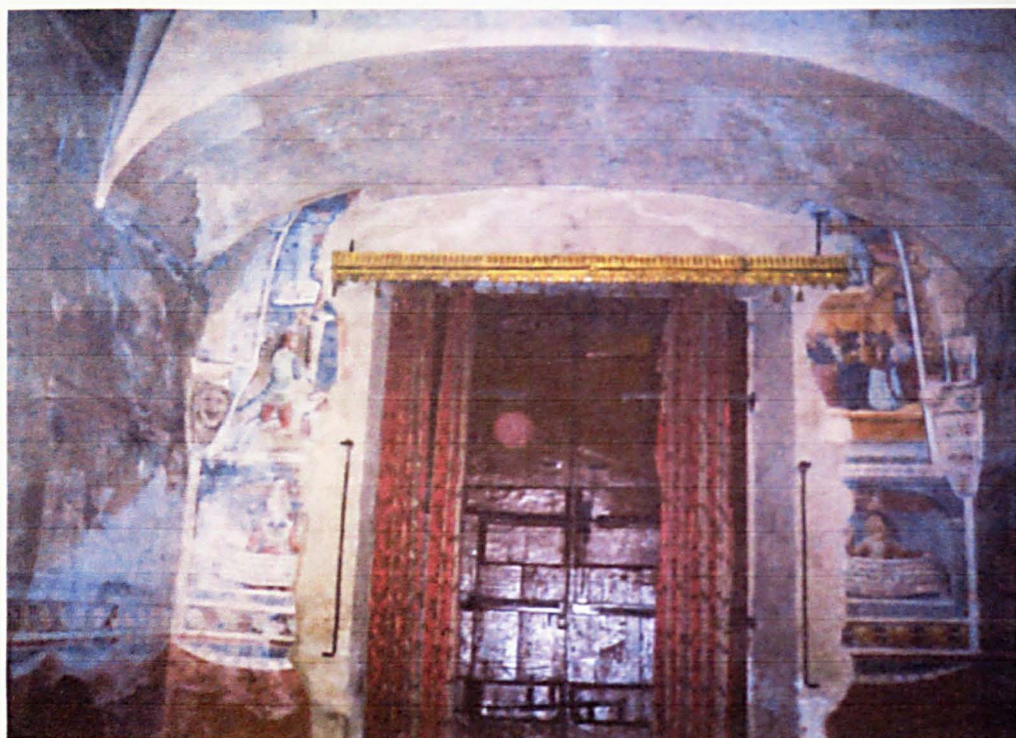
1488 PIANI, IMPERIA: THE INFLUENCE OF THE ORSINI DOMESTIC GENRE ON A CHURCH CYCLE

The Church of Santa Maria Assunta di Piani, Imperia. Fresco by Tommaso and Matteo Biasacci, originally from Busca, Cuneo

Piani was originally a place of pilgrimage because of the presence of a famous statue of the Virgin and Child.²⁶⁴ It is just down the coast from the Bishop's palace at Albenga and may well have been influenced by that room. Well before 1488, the Sibyl cycle had been established as an appropriate didactic motif in churches. There was an established sub-genre of painted Sibyls under church arches in Lombardy, and Piedmont, not many miles away. However, stylistically Piani has nothing to do with that tradition and everything to do with the Orsini manner, so it is sensible to consider it here. [See picture opposite]

The Sibyls are, as in the Orsini rooms, situated above a dado with *trompe l'œil* hanging tapestries below it. No other extant church cycles display this feature and it

²⁶⁴ See Carla di Francesco., p. 43 fn 20. See also my translation of that book, p. 12.



Piani Imperia: general view of the west door atrium



Piani Imperia: the beginning of the cycle and the damage on the left wall of the atrium

clearly demonstrates its origin in Orsini-influenced private rooms. [See picture opposite.] So far the cycle adheres to the Orsini Pattern. However, it differs in three important respects. The first important difference is the location of the cycle, it is not in a domestic setting, as are all other Orsini frescos, but in what was originally the sanctuary of the Church. The second difference is that figures are not standing against greenery as if in a garden or in front of mille fleurs tapestry; they are under painted arches with what appear to be cells or small rooms in perspective behind them. The third significant difference is the question of scale. These are not full figures but half figures and they do not dominate the architectural space, constituting a 'Room of the Sibyls', in the way that the figures do in Orsini domestic settings. This would be inappropriate, even sacrilegious, in the context of the sanctuary of a church, which has the main focus on the altar with its crucifix as a setting for the liturgy, the Sacrifice of the Mass.

These frescos were painted during the Rectorship of Antonio Barberius. It is tempting to assume a relationship with the author of the *Discordantiae nonnullae*, Barbieri, but there is no evidence to affirm or disprove that. However, Barbieri's *Discordantiae* was published only seven years before, and its enormous circulation did, no doubt, increase enthusiasm for such ecclesiastical Sibyl cycles. Some direct influence can be detected. This is the first fresco to paint all the figures of the Sibyls under rounded arches like those in the Barbieri woodcuts.

The Sibyls are painted round the walls of what is now the atrium of the main door at the end of the nave. They are considerably vitiated by time, damp and an insensitive, destructive sixteenth-century building works. [See picture opposite.] The church, which was originally orientated towards the East, was turned through 180° at that time, in order to add a larger choir and High Altar where building space was available at the West end of the church. The original choir then became an atrium to the door at the end of the nave. That door was punched through the wall and a gallery was added in the place where the original east window had been, vitiating the upper series of frescos. These Sibyls would originally



Piani Imperia: Detail: The beginning of the cycle: Sibillae Hellespontica and Persica; the rest of the wall is blank where the frescos have been destroyed



Piani Imperia: Sibilla Samia on the west wall of the atrium to the left of the door

have occupied a much more prominent place surrounding the high altar, the focal point of the building.

The mistaken text at Piani as an insight into the painting of frescos

There seem to have been twelve Sibyls. Piani is interesting because of the seemingly nonsensical attributions of unsuitable and inaccurate names to the painted figures on the right of the atrium. When one first sees the fresco, this seems careless to the point of contrariness.²⁶⁵ It is interesting because it throws light on the methods of construction of these fifteenth-century frescos.

The impression gained is that the Humanist writer of the scheme for Piani, the painter and the artisan sign writer, did not work together and mistakes occurred. In the Early Renaissance, many painters were illiterate. Separate lettering specialists were employed after the pictures were painted. Here, it seems neither the humanist designer nor any other literate person in authority were present when the lettering was applied. There has been an obvious mistake in naming the painted Sibyls.

Planning the coincident presence of artisans of different trades on building sites is very difficult today. There is no reason to suppose that things were different in the past. The design of the paintings themselves at Imperia implies that the scribe was expected to arrive after the artist had gone and the pictorial form allowed for this. No hand or article of clothing transgresses the scrolls, so that a blank white space, little related to the overall image and pictorial composition, is left at the bottom of the picture, framed by the edges of the scroll. Some scrolls appear simply to float in front of the figures with little relationship to them. [See picture of Sibylla Elespontica opposite.] This suggests that the painter departed leaving

²⁶⁵ The mistakes here may be the result of transmission of mistaken precedent elsewhere; we cannot know how many Sibyl Cycles have been lost in the intervening centuries. However, whether or not Piani is the first and only instance of this, we can be certain that the attribution of names and text to painted images at Piani is bizarre.



Piani Imperia: the wrongly labelled 'Egyptian Sibyl': a picture of a European Queen



Piani Imperia: the wrongly labelled 'Sibilla Europa': in fact the Egyptian Sibyl

blank scrolls with enough room for extensive oracles, and later, the scribe applied the text. However, image and text have been imperfectly matched.

There is nothing mistaken or strange about the attribution of names and oracles on the left side of the atrium; it is on the right hand side that a startling misidentification occurs.

Left side of the atrium:

The first Sibyl is the Sibila Elespontica, a woman in Italian clothing, perhaps unconsciously, rather vulgarly coloured and cut.²⁶⁶ The title of the next figure reads: 'Sibila ...' (the name is excised). Most of the figure is destroyed but her identity can be established from the remaining text, if one assumes that the artist is following the canonical text, as is the case in all the other named Sibyls at Piani. Assuming canonical usage, she is the Sibylla Persica. The rest of the fresco on the left wall of the atrium is destroyed. There were probably five Sibyls because there is evidence of five on the south side. There is one Sibyl on each side of the door in the end wall. The one on the left of the door is therefore the sixth: Sibilla Samia. No Sibyls have been lost because of the insertion of the door, presumably because there was a space left for the altar in that position in the original orientation of the church.

Right side of the atrium

The six on the other side of the atrium are very interesting indeed. I shall refer to them by number, continuing to count from left to right. Number 7 is placed on the end wall immediately to the right of the door to the exterior. The text on her scroll has survived and she is termed the 'Sibilla egiptis'. [See the picture opposite.] according to the red-letter

²⁶⁶ Left and right here assume that one is facing into the atrium where the Sibyl frescos are found with one's back to the High Altar.

painted name on her scroll below her oracle, a north African Sibyl.²⁶⁷ She has however, a peaches-and-cream complexion and is dressed in the garb of a French Queen wearing the Northern European high fashion of the 1480s. Next to her round the corner, is number 8, the so-called, 'Sibilla europa'. She, amazingly, is coal-black, like the Sibylla Libica of Siena Floor. Siena is the only previous cycle to introduce a black Sibyl. This extraordinary collocation of absurdly named Sibyls can only be the result of mis-naming. Sibyl seven, the French Queen figure, must have been intended to represent Europe, whilst Sibyl eight, the black Sibyl, surely is the Egyptian Sibyl.

The next Sibyl in the sequence, number nine, is the Sibylla 'Tibultina'. Her clothing is simpler than the Egyptis and the Samia, and Italian in style. The following part of the fresco is substantially destroyed, only the arches and heads remaining of Sibyls ten and eleven. Most of the last Sibyl remains with half of her scroll. From what remains of the text, we can identify her as the Sibylla Cumana, the Cimmerian Sibyl. Again, the inspiration for her highly artficed head gear is French, whilst the rest of her clothes are typically Italian.

Above the door is a notice, recording the names of the painter and dates of completion. The date seems to be 1488 and the painter, 'thomas debuscha'. The Latin notice on the wall only mentions, 'Thomas of Busca'. . [See picture opposite.]

Costume

Clothing is the conventional Italian aristocratic dress of the time and there are no attributes. The influence of French fashion can be seen in this North-western province. The Sibilla Samia sports a high, ermine-trimmed, *henin* headdress and veil and the Egiptis is accoutred in the aristocratic French fashion of the time, with corseted figure and a *henin* with

²⁶⁷ This name is a version of, 'Sibilla Agrippa', probably arising from a mistaken reading of a handwritten source. In the Bologna *Rappresentazione*, however, there are thirteen Sibyls, since both the Sibylla Agrippa and the Sibylla Egypta are present. I know of no other such example.

a crown. The Cumana also wears a French inspired double crowned headdress. These very much echo the designs in the Baldini series of prints.

TEXT

Much of the text is missing here at Piani, as are several of the Sibyls. However, as a result of the research done in this dissertation, it would be possible to tell the church authorities what the words of the original oracles were, with a reasonable degree of confidence. Where text is present, the fragments left attributed to named Sibyls correspond exactly with the canon; therefore the whole of the original quotation can be estimated by comparing what remains with the canonical Sibylline oracles.

1: SIBILLA ELESPONTICA

The inscription reads:

Jesus cristus nascetur de casta.

Jesus Christ born of the Pure One.

This shows it to be the canonical oracle of the Orsini Hellespontine Sibyl.

2: SIBILLA PERSICA

Sufficient of the inscription remains (half the scroll is missing) to be quite sure that this is the canonical Orisini oracle belonging to the Persica. The strong presumption is that the name of the Sibyl is Persica. One can see from the photograph what remains of the following oracle, here marked in bold print:

Ecce bestia conculcaberis et gignetur dominus in orbem terrarum. Et in
gremium virginis erit salus gentium et pedes eius in validudine hominum. (The
canonical oracle continues, 'Invisibile verbum palpabitur,' but this seems absent
at Piani Imperia.)

*Behold, He will tread down the beasts, and all growing things, Lord of all the
Kingdoms of the world, in the lap of a virgin. He will be the saviour of mankind*



Piani Imperia: general view of the right hand wall of the atrium



Piani Imperia: the left hand end of the right wall of the atrium

and his feet bring the health of men. (The invisible Word will be made palpable flesh, is omitted.)

3: MISSING

4: MISSING

5: MISSING.

6: SIBILLA SAMIA

Sufficient of this scroll remains (highlighted here) to be certain that the full canonical Orsini / Revello oracle is written here except that astris is rendered stellis:

Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de paupercula, et bestie terre adorabunt eum, clamabunt (et dicent): laudate eum in stellis celorum.

Behold, he who is rich will come to be born of a poor woman, and the wild beasts of the earth shall adore him and shall cry aloud, and say, 'Praise him to the stars of Heaven'.

7: SIBILLA EGIPTUS

[See the picture opposite of the right hand corner of the atrium.] Only the left hand margin of the scroll is missing therefore we can be quite certain that a slightly shortened version of the canonical oracle of the Sibilla Agripa, of which 'Egiptus' is a pseudonym, is recorded here. (The text remaining on the fresco is highlighted here.)

Invisibile verbum palpabitur, et germinabit ut radix, seccabitur ut folium et non apparebit venustas eius et circumdabitur (?-)-nati flebit deus in leticia sempiterna, et ab hominibus -- Nascetur inter eis ex matre virgine et conversabitur ut peccator.

The invisible word will be made palpable flesh and though he will spring as from the root, he will be withered like a leaf and will not appear beautiful. He will be confined-- God, the eternal joy, will weep and [perhaps, will be despised]



Piani Imperia: damage to the right hand wall of the atrium



Piani Imperia: right hand end of right wall

of men. He will be born among us from his virgin mother, that the sinner may be converted.

8: SIBILLA EUROPIA

Her oracle is the canonical Europa quotation:

Veniet ille et transibit colles et montes et lattices olympi et regnabit in paupertate et dominabitur in silencio, et egredietur de utero virginis.

He will come and will cross valleys, mountains and Olympian heights. He will reign in poverty and will himself be governed remaining silent, being born of a virgin's womb.

[See the picture overleaf of the right hand wall of the atrium.]

9: SIBILLA TIBULTINA

[See picture opposite.] Sufficient of her scroll is left to determine that she has the first three lines of the canonical Tiburtine inscription, all that the architectural space will allow (the remaining text is emboldened):

Nascetur Christus in Betheleem: et annunciabitur in Nazareth regnante tuauro (sic) pacifico fundatore quietis. et felix illa mater cuius ubera illum lactabunt.

Christ shall be born in Bethlehem and he shall be announced in Nazareth, the peaceful Taurus reigning, founder of rest, being in the ascendant and oh happy mother whose breast shall suckle him.

10: Only the head is present.

She is a strong featured older woman, slightly reminiscent of the crone at Valgrana.

11: Only the top of the turbaned head is present.

12: SIBILLA CUMANA

Sufficient of this quotation remains to identify it as the canonical extract from Virgil's Messianic *Eclogue*. Here, the oracle originally consisted of the first three lines of the *Eclogue*. (the text remaining on the fresco is emboldened):

Ultima cumei venit iam carminis aetas / Magnus ab integro seculorum **nascitur**
ordo. / Iam reddit et virgo, reddeunt **saturna regna;** / jam nova progenies e
cello dimittitur **alto.**

*Now the last period of Cumaean song has come. The great succession of Ages is
born again from the beginning, / Now also, the Virgin returns, and the rule of
Saturn comes again, / Now a new progeny descends from high Heaven.*

c. 1451 GENOA A GROUP OF FOUR SIBYLS: GERMAN INFLUENCED

The Loggia of the Annunciation, at the Church of Santa Maria Castello. Roundels on the vault: half portraits standing. Text: Latin on scrolls. Background: painted damask. Artist in charge of whole loggia project: 'Justus de Alemagne', from Ravensburg. This ceiling, however, was probably executed by his associates.

The text of this cycle, like that at Lucerna, is different, in two instances, from that of the Orsini wall. As has been noted, the text of the 'canonical' Sibylline oracles had not yet reached North Western Italy in the early 1450s. There are two oracles that are outside the Orsini canon and I do not know the sources of these. As far as I am aware, these texts appear nowhere else in Italian frescos. The artist comes from Ravensburg and at the time the political alliances of Genoa would be Northern, as would the cultural influences.

This is very early, about the same date as the Casa Romei. It has nothing to do with the Orsini cycles and is not a full Cycle. There are four Sibyls painted in the quadrants of the roof vaulting, matched by four prophets in the corresponding sections of the next bay. The Sibyls are: Persica, 'Erithea', Tiburtina and Cumana. These are included in this study because they mark the appearance of the genre in an ecclesiastical public setting, seemingly



Genova: Sibilla Persica



Genova: Sibilla Erithea

independent of the Orsini form. Soon however, although Sibyl rooms in private settings ceased to be produced, the Orsini selection of text and its attribution were to become canonical in ecclesiastical buildings. Two of the oracles here come from what was later to be the canonical selection.

TEXT

1: PERSICA

This is a shortened form of the Orsini quotation. [See picture opposite]

**Ecce gignetur Dominus in orbe terrarum et gremium virginis erit salus
gencium et pedes eius in valetudine hominum.**

*Behold, God will be born into the lands of this world in the lap of a virgin. He
will be the Saviour of mankind and his feet bring the blessing of mankind.*

The Latin is in Gothic script and exceedingly difficult to read because of the very liberal use of contractions which I have removed for the sake of clarity.

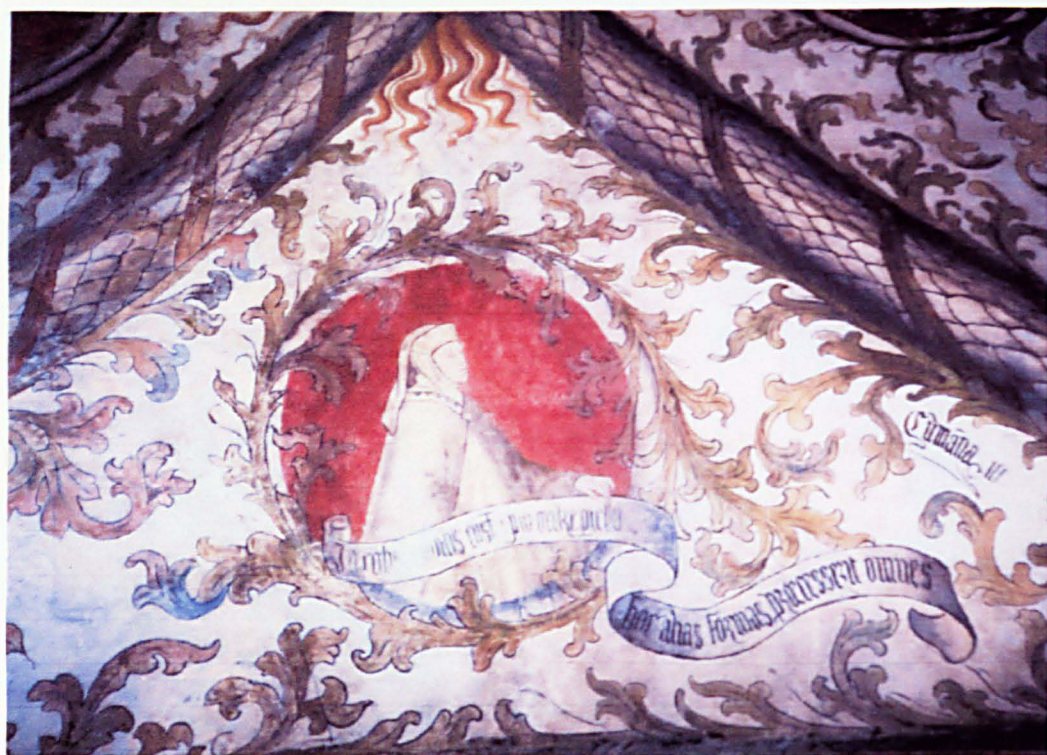
2: ERITHEA

This is substantially the same quotation as that given to the Sibylla Erythraea on the floor of Siena Cathedral.

**De excelso Caelorum habitaculo prospexit dominus humiles suos et
nascetur in diebus novissimis de virgine hebraea filius in cunabulis terrae.**

*From the high habitation of Heaven, God has looked down on his humble
(servants) and a son shall be born in these latest days of a Hebrew Virgin in the
cradle of the Earth.*

The source seems not to be Lactantius. The manuscripts show this quotation to have been that of the Sibilla Eritrea on the Orsini Wall. N. B. The word *filius* is not on the floor at Siena.



Genova: Sibilla Cumana



Genova: Sibilla Tiburtina

3: CUMANA

(arts of this oracle are obliterated, the paint being faded. [See picture opposite])

**?In rob (?)- (dom?)inus cust(?). pia matre puella.....hoc alias formas
praecesserit omnes .**

This is not the quotation from the Orsini wall as recorded in the Olomouc MS. which is the '*Ultima Cumei...*' quotation attributed to the Sibilla Cumana on the floor at Siena. It departs from the Orsini canon.

4: TIBURTINA

**Nas—tet (?I)ps(?e) h—no lucem ripet-erit at cuneta (i)llustr(?a)r (?m)
caelestia tecta sub— ——— ———.**

The end of the quotation is now lost. The manuscripts show this is not what was on the Orsini wall for the Tiburtina or any other Sibyl.

Two of these four Sibyls display the canonical oracles. This is a very early rendering of Sibyls in a Church. So far, I have been unable to find a manuscript source of these quotations, or to establish their origin.

Artistic Style and Costume

The Sibyls are within roundels, like those of Brossasco, painted at about the same time. They are three quarter figures painted in the quadrants of the vaulting. However, unlike those at Brossasco, the figures have a weight and depth, a sense of perspective that marks them out as Renaissance artefacts, not Mediaeval. The painted background however, looks very like a decorated mediaeval manuscript with a sunburst at the apex and formalised, curling, leafy greenery against a white background. The liernes are also painted with a formal design of stylised bay leaves over the surface and with green ribbon bands seeming to be wound round the 'round' lierne. All this strikes the eye as late Gothic decoration. However, within the Tondi, the Sibyls are painted against a background of damask. The

scrolls that they hold transgress the edges of the tondi and establish a connection with the late Gothic decorative background.

Matilda Gagliardo writes that the conception of the scrolls, since they are carried, renders them part of the figures, and gives them thus a certain distinctiveness.²⁶⁸ In this aspect, and the double sided contour, the scrolls of the Sibyls and Prophets of the loggia of the Annunciation, of Santa Maria di Castello, at Genoa (c. 1451) resemble those of the Sibyls of Casa Romei²⁶⁹ This is interesting since these two were of practically the same date.

Like the Sibyls of the Casa Romei, the Sibyls wear the dress of the time, though perhaps less expensive and aristocratic than those at Ferrara. The exception is the Sibilla Persica. This is the first instance of a real attempt being made to indicate the exotic origins of an individual Sibyl. Two of the other Sibyls, Cumana and Tiburtina, are Italian in origin and the Erythraean Sibyl is dressed like them, as a modest Italian woman, with a veil covering her head very like a nun. However, the Persica is dressed in what might be taken to be Persian garb. She sports a turban and over her shoulders is a shawl with horizontal stripes, widely spaced, very like a Jewish prayer shawl. That is probably the origin of the design: not Persian, but certainly Eastern and exotic, and probably the only Eastern garment that the German working in Genoa has seen.

What we have here, is a transitional style moving from the decorative linear art of the mediaeval age to an art that aspires to greater surface realism at the beginning of the Renaissance.

²⁶⁸ In *Le Sibille di Casa Romei: Storia e restauro*, p 30. See my translation of this work, p.14.

²⁶⁹ Vide A. Poleggi, *S. Maria di Castello e il romanico a Genova* (Genova: [n. pub.], 1973), pp. 163-183.

B
19

**A STUDY OF THE EARLY RENAISSANCE
SIBYL CYCLES IN THE ART OF
NORTHERN AND CENTRAL ITALY**

IN 3 VOLUMES

VOLUME II

Reba Ann Gibb

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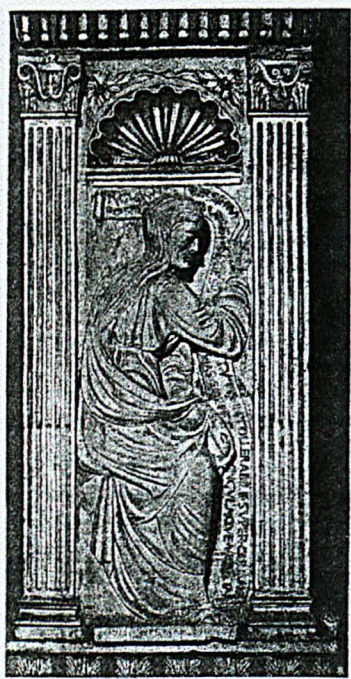
**PART III (CONTINUED): THE SIBYL CYCLES
OF CENTRAL AND NORTHERN ITALY**

**SECTION I (CONTINUED) SIBYLS CYCLES
BEFORE THE ADVENT OF THE PRINTED
IMAGE**

**CHAPTER II: SIBYLS CARVED IN STONE:
RIMINI AND SIENA**

LEFT HAND PILLAR AT RIMINI

Reading from left to right round the pillar starting with the outward face in the nave



Sibyl 1



Sibyl 2



Prophet



Sibyl 3



Sibyl 4



Sibyl 5

PART III: THE SIBYL CYCLES OF CENTRAL AND NORTHERN ITALY (CONTINUED)

CHAPTER II: SIBYLS CARVED IN STONE: RIMINI AND SIENA

THE TWO SITES IN ITALY WITH SHARED HETERODOX TEXT

1454-5 RIMINI: THE TEMPIO MALATESTIANO

**THE SIBYLS OF THE CHAPEL OF THE ANCESTORS, formerly called THE
CHAPEL OF THE MADONNA DEL ACQUA**

This work marks an important change in the iconography of the Sibyls and in the rendering of historical subjects in the history of Art. It will therefore be considered extensively. [See composite pictures opposite and on the following page.]

The Social Context and intended Rhetoric

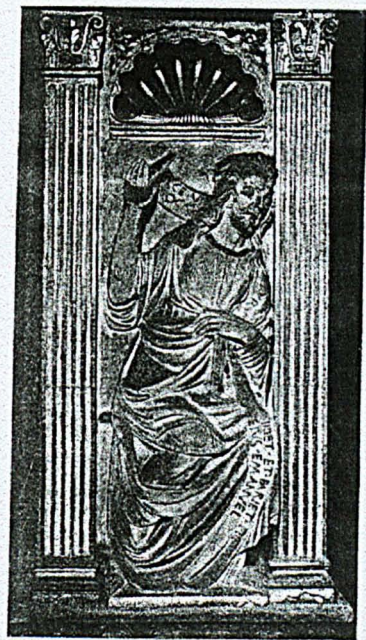
The infamous reputation of Malatesta, much trumpeted by his enemy the Piccolomini Pope, often takes precedence over calm analysis of what is actually in the Malatesta Temple. However, Malatesta's motives and intentions must be borne in mind when examining the Sibyls and their rhetorical purpose in the context of his chapel.

The Temple is a funerary chapel, for the Malateste and their supposed circle. It is a monument to the glorious dead, constructed to secure status for the living, to aggrandise the Malatesta dynasty and their rights to continued tenure of their territory, as though its natural and hereditary rulers. If history failed to provide sufficient evidence of an hereditary right to rule, the Chapel might. What the citizenry saw presently before them might be expected to have more power than the memories of their grandfathers.

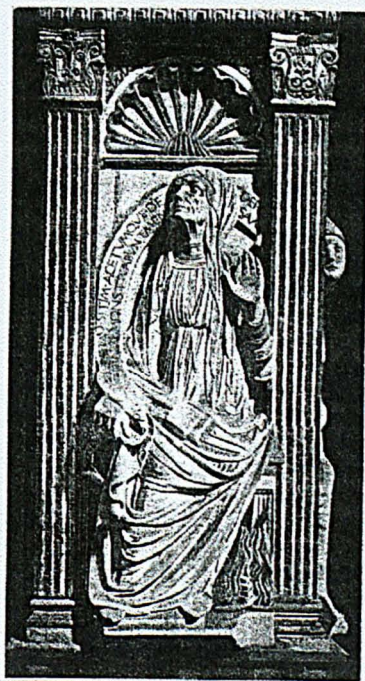
Just as nineteenth-century parvenus collected 'family portraits', Malatesta collected corpses. The exterior of the Temple is decorated with the coffins of the intellectually distinguished. The implication is that, when living, they were part of the Malatesta Circle. Malatesta burgled the body of that most eminent Greek scholar, Cardinal Bessarion, whom

RIGHT HAND PILLAR AT RIMINI

Reading from left to right round the pillar starting with the inward face in the chapel



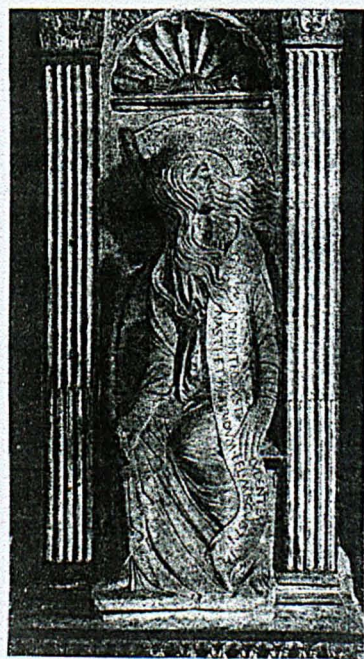
Prophet



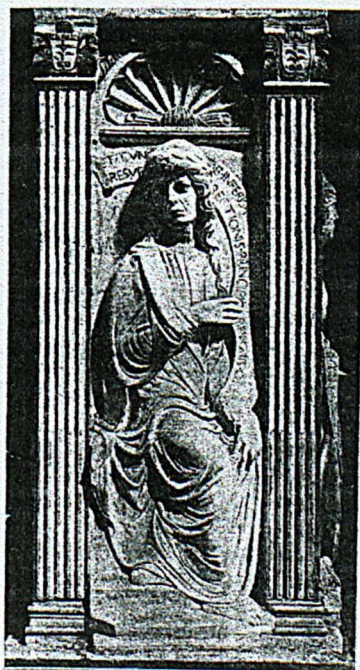
Sibyl 6



Sibyl 7



Sibyl 8



Sibyl 9



Sibyl 10

he had never met, to add it to the sarcophagi adorning the exterior of his temple.²⁷⁰ Its presence implies that Bessarion was a close associate of the Malateste. (Sigismundo had written inviting Bessarion to his court, but the living Bessarion had never arrived. His body had, indeed, been resting quietly elsewhere for some years.)

The body of Galeotto Roberto, Sigismundo's half-brother, was of considerable importance, since Galeotto was revered for his saintly self-abnegation. An attractive personality who had died young, he had much popular appeal. He was also the antithesis of all that Sigismondo represented. The young man had died at twenty-one as a result of the ascetic privations he inflicted upon himself. The tomb was to be in the middle at the front of the building, since it was virtually worshipped by the local population and was said to be the source of miracles. This particular placing of the tomb was convenient, since it both publicised the eminent virtue of the family but kept the unwashed at bay outside the Temple. During the building of the Temple, the body had to be secured behind locked iron gates for fear of enthusiastic relic-hunters. He had, it appeared, also expressed a testamentary wish, saying he felt unworthy to be buried inside a Church. Unkind persons might have said that he was in no such danger inside the Malatesta mausoleum.

The image presented is that Malatesta was a virtuous prince and a scholarly Humanist with arcane interests. One would never know from the chapel that this *condottiere* capable of extreme savagery was not a quiet intellectual and devoted husband. The Chapel is a monument to his ancestors and life-long mistress, married in his last years.

It is in this context that the Sibyls are to be understood. Part of the function of the building was to redeem the reputation of the feminine, and of the woman most important to

²⁷⁰ Cardinal Bessarion, who came to Italy from Greece for the council of Ferrara-Florence and stayed to introduce Greek learning to the Western Church, in fact left his extensive library of Greek books to the Republic of Venice. It was later given appropriate housing in Sansovino's great Library. He had little to do with Rimini.

Sigismondo. Isotta was more famous as a mistress than a wife. Isotta's resting place is surpassingly beautiful, and the message is of peaceful life, adorned by Art and Science, represented throughout by female figures and children. By association, by the conditioning ambience, the most important female buried therein becomes virtuous. The chapel of the Sibyls is part of that representational rhetoric.

The Sibyls are placed in the Chapel of the Ancestors as symbols of ancient attested Classical tradition, analogous to the supposed ancient, fixed probity of the Malatesta. The satisfactory emotive parallels are obvious. Sibyls, whilst at first believed to be wild, pagan and outside the confines of the traditional Church, were really inspired with unconventional vision and foresight which was later accepted as truth: the best self-justification of the Malatesta that could be imagined.

Artistic Style and Appearance

There is a large measure of agreement amongst art historians that the work is at best very uneven, possibly made by the assistants and apprentices of the famous artists working here. It is certainly not to the standard of the work elsewhere in the building, for example the low reliefs in the Chapel of the Planets. However, since this study is concerned with their contribution to the development of the iconography of the Sibyls, and the underlying conception and design is innovative, they are very interesting indeed.

Innovations made in the genre by Roberto Valturio

Valturio was the Humanist at the Malatesta court commissioned to provide the scheme for the designs in the Temple. This is the first cycle to be clothed in garments that are not simply Italian contemporary fashion of the upper classes. Serious academic work has been done, by Valturio or others, to try to produce costume that has some appearance of Classical authenticity, the appearance of ancient Greece and Rome. It is also the first cycle where Sibyls are given peculiar attributes, swords, burning books, wreathes of greenery and the like, that clearly appertain to the origins of the Sibyls in Classical antiquity. It is extremely frustrating that, when the work was abandoned, their names were never carved upon the

sculptures, since the intention is evidently to fit the attributes, age and costume of the individual Sibyls to information gained from Classical and early Christian texts.

Valturio wrote to Poggio Bracciolini to seek his advice as to how to proceed. The letter from Valturio is now lost but Bracciolini's reply is preserved.²⁷¹ Bracciolini recommends the Orsini wall as a model, 'made in Good Old Eugenius's day', but, disappointingly says little else. I do not know whether Valturio went to see the Orsini Palace Cycle. If he did, he took little notice, either of the costume design, which was contemporary Italian, or of the canonical text.²⁷²

COSTUME

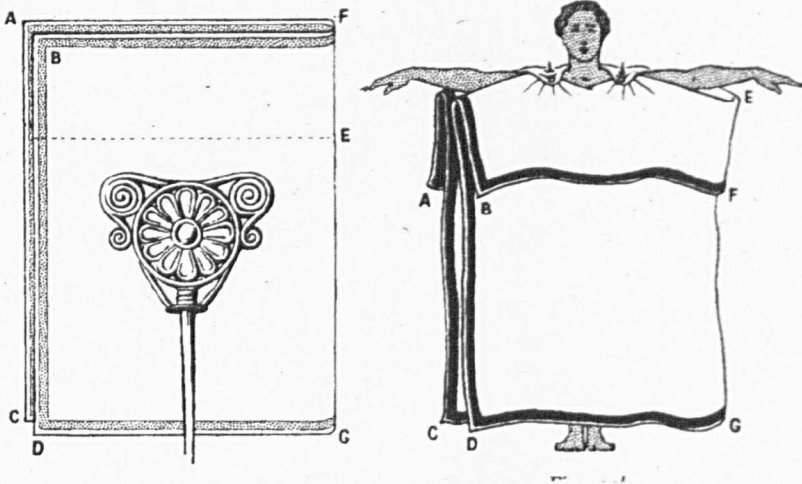
After the astonishing oeuvre of Giovanni Pisano, so much before its time, this cycle seems to be the first to attempt to render historical costume: authentic Classical garb for Classical Sibyls.

The recognition of, and emphasis on, the 'otherness' of the time and place in which historical personages lived, and the attempt to render that, is a truly revolutionary artistic change, early in the Renaissance, here at Rimini. However, the Classical dress is adapted to the Italian sense of decorum. It is worn over an early Renaissance sleeved undershirt or chemise, no doubt to appease a sense of decency about the uncovered arms of older women. This would never have been the case in Classical Greece. There are classical examples of sleeved garments on vases of the fifth century BC, however that is always an indication of a foreigner, usually Egyptian.

²⁷¹ See Poggio Bracciolini, *Lettere. III. Epistolarum Familiarium libri secundum volumen*, ed. H. Harth (Firenze: L. S. Olschi, 1984-1987).

²⁷² We can be sure that the Orsini Palace Cycle had contemporary, not Classical, costumes since all the subsequent cycles based on it are very like each other and all display contemporary aristocratic high fashion.

THE GREEK CHITON



Illustrations from: Mary Houston, *Ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine Costume and Decoration*, second edition, (London: Black, 1947).

Classical Greek dress was rather like the modern Indian sari; it was essentially flat pieces of fabric wound or pinned onto the body. Women did not wear cut and sewn sleeves; even the tunics of the hoplites were not cut or stitched. The younger, disgruntled-looking Sibyl 5, sits sporting what should be a shapely bare arm, since she only wears the *chiton*. This is the only completely accurate Classical rendering of costume. Unfortunately, the arm lacks something in the execution.

What is surprising and innovative is that the costumes placed over the demure sleeved undergarment are otherwise exceptionally accurate, both in terms of understanding the structure and the manner of wearing the garment. Research into Classical vases or sculpture has clearly been undertaken.

There are three Classical Greek garments, in general correctly worn by the Sibyls at Rimini: the *chiton*, the *chlamys* and the *himation*. The overgarment worn by all the Sibyls is the *chiton*, or *kiton*, a garment made from a flat, oblong untailored piece of material like a sheet, cut from the cloth at the height of the wearer's shoulders. It was applied to the body, just as a modern sari is, but in a different manner. [See the picture opposite.] It was folded in half lengthwise and the wearer stepped inside with half the material in front and half at the back and consequently a split down one side. Sometimes it was woven with extra length so that it could have a deep fold, rather like a bed-sheet fold, at the top to give extra warmth or a fashionable difference. The *chitons* at Rimini do not have this feature. It was pinned onto the body in gathers on the shoulders, with decorative pins, the front overlapping the back. This left an opening from shoulder to ankle on one side of the wearer. This was pinned together from under the arm to the top of the thigh. A shapely leg protruding from the *chiton* when a young body is in motion is a familiar sight on Greek vases. (This is however, rigorously excluded from Valturio's Sibyls.) Ribbons or bands held the *chiton* onto the body, either just under the bust, at the waist, or at the hips. These can be seen on the waist of the older Sibyl 1, and just under the bust of the younger Sibyls, 2 and 7. Sometimes the cut was longer than the distance from shoulder to floor, and in that case, a belt could be worn and the material

pulled up through it and allowed to drop over it, falling in a graceful fold or *kolpos*. This can be seen at the waistline of Sibyl 5.

The second Classical garment appearing at Rimini is the *himation*. This is rather like a cloak, or an enormous scarf, having the same function. Sibyl 4 illustrates it perfectly; whoever has designed this has looked carefully at Greek vases or statues. The *himation* was about two feet wide, wider if the material were diaphanous. It is very long, cut to suit the height of the wearer and made of fine material that will fall in folds well. It was worn in Classical times in the following way: One end was thrown over the left shoulder, the end hanging down at the back just below the waist, or to ground level. It was then consciously draped in a beautiful fold across the chest, reaching the right shoulder. It was then wound up, past the right ear and over the head, forming a hood, and then falling down on the left for the whole length of the body, to a point level with the hem of the *chiton* just above the left foot. It was held in place by the left arm held against the body, leaving the right hand and arm free. This is just what we see in Sibyl 4. The 'hood' could fall back and drape itself over the shoulders and back in a flattering manner. Here, the raised hood gives authority, power and dignity to the Sibyl. She looks like a lawgiver.

The third garment, the *chlamys*, was a rectangle of material, cut to the dimensions of the wearer, worn as a cloak by pinning the top two corners together in the front of the chest with a decorative brooch, usually round. This is exactly what we see on Sibyl 5. If we look carefully, we can see that Sibyl 4 is wearing such a cloak under her *himation*. There is a shorter, wider form of the *chlamys* that simply passes under one arm and is pinned together on the opposite shoulder, thence falling in graceful folds.

The contribution made by the designs at Rimini to the genre

Although at times the execution of the Sibyls at Rimini leaves much to be desired, the design of these costumes is revolutionary and contains some features that were not fully exploited till the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Strangely, some of the more attractive young Sibyls, Sibyls 2 and especially 7, for example, have a distinct air of Jane

Austen about their appearance. This is not fortuitous. It is because at both periods, designers were aiming to use authentic materials and produce an effect that was based on Classical models. This cycle widened the scope of visual effects in the genre.

TEXT

This is an unfinished work of art; Sigismondo's money ran out in the 1460s. Alberti's scheme for the whole building went unfinished. When work stopped, only seven out of the ten Sibyls in the Chapel of the Ancestors had had inscriptions applied to their scrolls. The scrolls of the three at the base of the left pillar have been left blank. This makes it impossible to give a complete account of the implied intentions of the scheme. It is though, relevant to note that all the oracles that do appear are chosen from Lactantius, and in the selection of these, the emphasis is placed on the tremendous efficacy of the passion of Christ to redeem the sinner almost in spite of, rather than because of, the efforts of the sinner.

Even though Poggio Bracciolini's letter recommends the Orsini wall as a source, it is clear that Valturio did not use it. None of the oracles of the Sibyls at Rimini had appeared on the Orisini wall painting. In the mid-fourteen-fifties, that list was still not canonical and it seems Valturio ignored or never saw the Orsini wall.

There is a further puzzle. Single Sibylline oracles preserved in Lactantius are often split and attributed to two different Sibyls. All Rimini oracles are taken from Lactantius..²⁷³ A possible explanation for the splitting of oracles, is that Valturio was working from an

²⁷³ See Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, translated by Sister Mary Francis McDonald, O.P. (New York: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964). Book IV, Ch. 18 and Book VII, Ch. 18 & 19. For the Latin oracles on the Sibyl panels at Rimini, I am working from: Corrado Ricci, *Il Tempio Malatestiano* (Rimini: Bruno Ghigi, 1974) who gives the full Latin text found on the sculptures. The full texts are not observable by anyone photographing or taking notes from a position standing on the floor. This is because the statues of the Sibyls themselves, when seen from a normal viewing position, obscure sections of text

undifferentiated intermediate text, in which a collection of Sibylline oracles were taken from Lactantius and written out as a continuum, without clear boundaries and with no attributions to particular Sibyls. Valturio may then have chosen short sections and allocated these to individual Sibyls, inevitably making his own breaks in the text in so doing. This produces instances where half of an oracle found in Lactantius is allocated to one Sibyl and the rest to another.

Valturio must have been using a manuscript source of Lactantius since 1454, the date of the construction of the Tempio Malatestiano was earlier than any printed edition. *The Divine Institutes* was the first printed book to be produced in Italy, which is a mark, perhaps, of how important the Sibyls' Oracles were believed to be. This was in 1465, eleven years after the Sibyls at Rimini, at Subiaco in the Monastery of St Scholastica, whose Abbot was Turrecremata, (Torquemada), uncle of the Spanish Inquisitor. The best Humanist scholarship would have prepared the Latin text for printing, comparing manuscript texts and preparing a scholarly edition likely to be superior to the text used at Rimini. This would account for the textual variance when comparing the oracles at Rimini and Siena. The oracles carved in these cycles are sometimes in précis, or selections from longer passages. Thus oracles can appear to be at variance, whilst simply being slightly different selections of phrases from the long prophecy in the source text, too long for insertion into the pictorial panels. None of the oracles chosen for Rimini are attributed by Lactantius to a particular named Sibyl. He merely says, 'the Sibyl says...'.

Lactantian Oracles at Siena are preserved with their boundaries intact. The three Siennese Sibyls' oracles not found at Rimini are the only three whose oracles do not come from Lactantius. There is only one Lactantian Sibylline oracle found at Rimini that is not used at Siena.



Rimini: Sibyl 1

THE TEXTS AND APPEARANCE OF THE SIBYLS IN THE TEMPIO MALATESTIANO, RIMINI

THE PILLARS AT RIMINI

Pattern of Sibyls identified by numbers.

L H PILLAR			R H PILLAR		
1	2	Micah	Isaiah	6	7
3	4	5	8	9	10

SIBYLS 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 have significant attributes

LEFT-HAND PILLAR

Reading from left to right, top to bottom round the pillar starting with the outward face in the nave.

TOP ROW OF LEFT HAND PILLAR

SIBYL 1

Appearance: Aged crone, Her head is uncovered, with loose hair down her back to waist level. She is seen in profile facing to her left. Her left hand rests upon her left knee whilst her right holds up her scroll. She wears a loose gown, rather like a Greek *chiton*, giving her a classical appearance. However the sculptor has not truly understood the construction of this classical garment and has given it loose tailored sleeves, fitted to the body of the garment.²⁷⁴ [See picture opposite]

Attributes: None.

Text:

JUGUM NOSTRE SERVITUTIS INTOLLERABILE SUPER COLLUM
POSITUM TOTUM LLET LEGES IMPIAS SOLVET VINCULAQUE VIOLENTA.

²⁷⁴ Ricci, p.484, suggests this may be the Sibilla Persica. The reasons are not clear to me.



Rimini: Sibyl 2

Placing our intolerable yoke of slavery on his own neck he takes away unjust laws and looses harsh fetters. (Lactantius *Div. Inst.* Last sentence of Book VII, Chapter 18. p.520.)

This is the only quotation that does not appear on the Siena floor.

SIBYL 2: SIBILA (ERITREA?)

Appearance: Young girl sitting with knees facing slightly to her left, but with head turned fully to the left in profile, looking inwards to the Chapel. Her head is covered with a veil, itself covered with a portion of her cloak, rather in the manner of a Greek *himation*. However, she also wears a mediaeval wimple under her chin joining the veil. The effect of this is perhaps to emphasise her modesty and purity, perhaps even conscious or emphatic chastity. She also has a gown made rather like a Greek *chiton*, giving a Classical effect, but again this has sleeves, here tailored and close fitting, revealing the shape of her comely arms and making her look youthful. Her left hand, resting on her knees, holds the end of her scroll.

Attributes: She has a golden unsheathed knife in her right hand, rather like a flaying knife in shape. The Baldini illustrations show a Sibyl with an unsheathed sword to be the Sibylla Eritrea. The Revello MS. also gives Eritrea a sword. [See picture opposite]

Text:

IN MANUS INFIDELIUM POSTEA VENIET DABUNT AUTEM MANIBUS
INCESTIS ET IMPURATO ORE EXPONENT.

At the last, he shall come into the hands of the unfaithful and then they shall lay filthy and impure hands on him and spit on him. (Lactantius *Div. Inst.* IV, 18. p. 293.)

This is a paraphrase of part of the Siena Libyan Sibyl's oracle: the part on her label not the part on the book she is holding.

The quotation on the book that the Siena Libica holds, '*Colaphos accipiens...*', appears at Rimini but is allocated to another Sibyl, number 7 on the top row of the right-hand



Rimini: Sibyl 3

pillar, facing the nave. That is not the Sibyl with the leafy head garland similar to the Siena Lybica.

Costume: There is a tentative identification of this Sibyl as the Erythraean Sibyl on the grounds that she holds a knife and in other cycles, e.g. the Baldini illustrations. The Erythraean Sibyl is the only Sibyl who holds a sword. No other Sibyl in the Rimini Cycle holds any kind of weapon.

In third position on the top row at Rimini: The Prophet Micah: ‘Ex te m.... egredietur qui sit dominator in israel et egressus eius ab initio a diebus aeternitatis.’ (Micah 5.2 ‘Out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler of Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.’)

BOTTOM ROW OF LEFT HAND PILLAR:

SIBYL 3

Appearance: Aged crone with loose hair to her waist seen in profile. She is very similar indeed in appearance to the Sibyl above her (Sibyl 1). One might almost say she could be the same figure in the same clothes and in an almost identical pose, except that her left hand is not raised but rests on the end of her scroll on her lap. [See picture opposite]

Attributes: None.

Text: None. There is no trace of words ever having been carved onto the scroll.

SIBYL 4

Appearance: The Sibyl is middle-aged, matronly, and seen squarely facing the observer. She wears a gold band round her head, possibly a crown. The head and band are covered by a section of her straight narrow cloak, forming a hood in the manner of a Greek *himation*. There may be an undercloth veil but there is no wimple. Again, this Sibyl wears a gown like a Greek *chiton*, belted under the bust, but having close-fitting tailored sleeves. [See picture overleaf]



Rimini: Sibyl 4



Rimini: Sibyl 5 with side view of Sibyl 4

Attributes: Crown.

There were Crowns on all the Sibyls in the early picture at Cortina di Ampezzo, but this is likely to be merely to indicate importance and does not do anything to identify individuals. There is one Sibyl at Albenga who wears a crown, but whilst there is slight 'ghosting' of the name on the wall, it is not decipherable by the naked eye without the aid of technological intervention. Rimini seems to be the last site where Sibyls are seen with crowns, and it is possible that this is less a Classical attribute and more a survival from an obscure mediaeval tradition that disappears with the advent of more stringent Classical scholarship.

Text: None. The scroll has no trace of words ever having been carved.

SIBYL 5

Appearance: The Sibyl is a young girl, sitting with her right hand supporting her head, probably intended to look pensive, disturbed and serious, but actually somehow looking thoroughly bored and disgruntled as if awaiting a late comer or absentee. Her *chiton* is belted at the waist and she wears a Greek cloak, fastened at the front with a large round brooch. She sits with her feet facing to her right, the right foot resting on what appears to be a low golden stool and her upper torso facing front, a restless, informal attitude. Her veil has slipped back, revealing her hair, parted in the centre. In her left hand, hanging by her side, she holds the end of her blank scroll. This is an ill-executed and anatomically unconvincing figure, carved on the inner side of the pillar, not observable from the nave. [See picture opposite]

Attributes: None.

Text: None.



Rimini: Sibyl 6

RIGHT-HAND PILLAR

Reading from left to right, top to bottom round the pillar, starting with the inward face at the top inside the Chapel.

TOP ROW RIGHT-HAND PILLAR

In first position on the top row The Prophet Isaiah. The text is taken from Isaiah 7.14.

Ecce virgo concipiet et pariet filium et vocabitur nomen eius emanuel.

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son: and shall call his name

Immanuel.

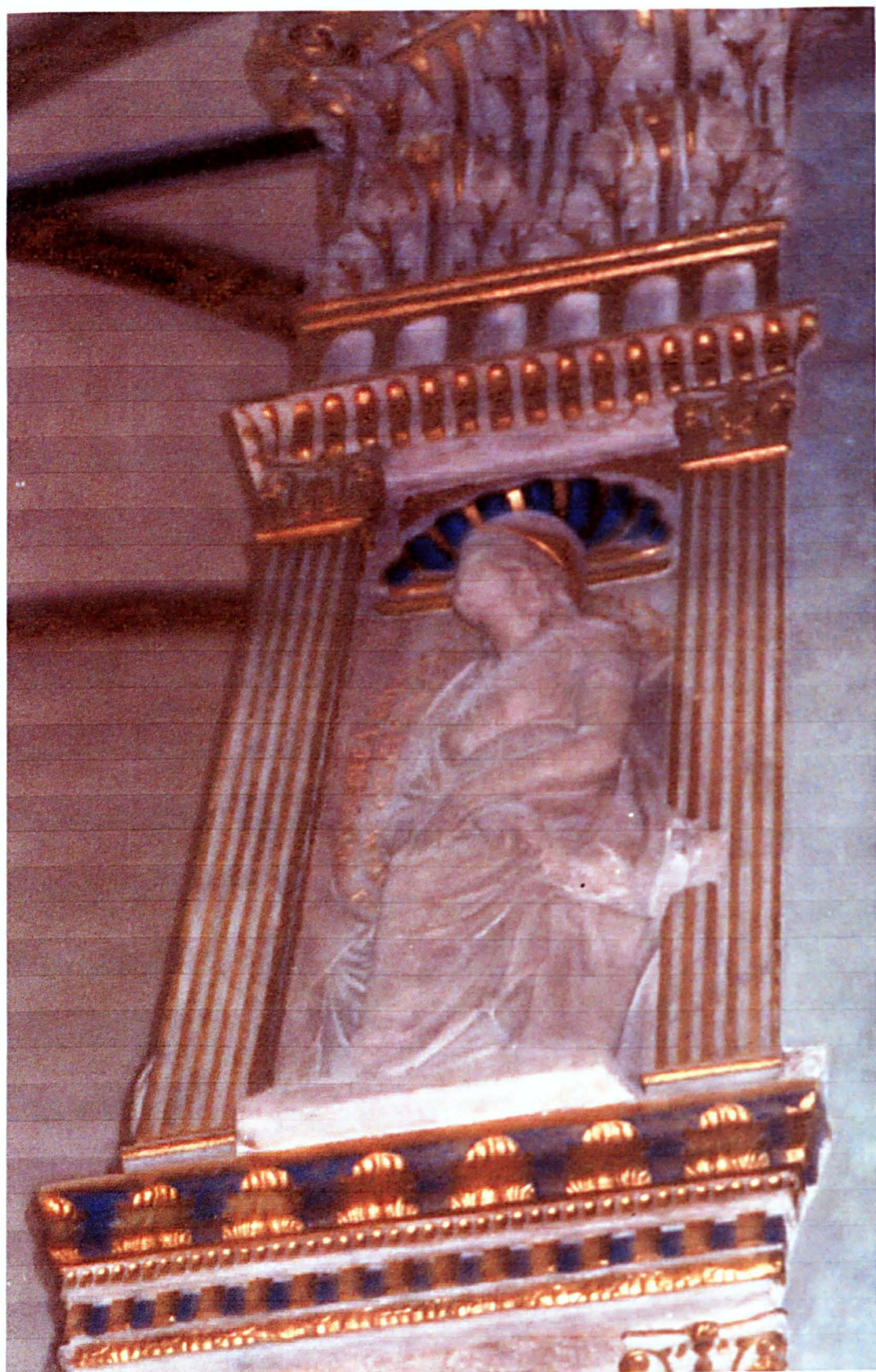
SIBYL 6: THE SIBILLA CUMANA

There is no doubt as to the identity of this Sibyl; to her left she has a pile of burning books

Appearance: She is an elderly Sibyl with her chin raised, rather in an attitude that refuses to be put down by insults (presumably Tarquin's) and with her left hand raised rather in the manner of a modern traffic policeman, in a gesture which seeks to stop an act or utterance, 'Stop! I will not heed you and you have only yourself to blame.' She sits facing the observer but with her head turned determinedly up and away. On her knees are two more books. Her head is covered with a portion of her cloak, and, like the other Sibyls, she wears what is apparently a Greek *chiton*, in her case belted under the bust, but having sleeves. Her right hand holds the end of the scroll. The image is very like the that of the Sibyl of Cumae at Siena. . [See picture opposite]

Attributes: Burning books.

This is the only Sibyl whose identity is certain, even though no name has been carved: to her left she has a pile of burning books. She must be the Sibyl of Cumae who offered her prophetic books to Tarquin and burned them when he spurned her. Valturio has clearly specified her costume and attributes working from Classical sources. The text however, is found at Siena as part of the Hellespontine Sibyl's oracle.



Rimini: Sibyl 7

Text:

**AD CIBUM [AUTEM FEL] ET AD SITIM ACETUMQUE DEDERUNT
INHOSPITALITATIS HANC MONSTRABUNT MENSAM.**

*For food gall, and in his thirst they gave him vinegar they will show forth this
inhospitable table. (Lactantius: Div. Inst. IV 18, pp. 293-4.)*

This is the first sentence of the Hellespontine Sibyl's utterance engraved on the floor of Siena Cathedral, made almost thirty years later. The second part of the Siena Hellespontine's oracle appears at Rimini in the mouth of Sibyl 10.

SIBYL 7

Appearance: She is an attractive young girl with curly shoulder-length locks, who wears a gold crown on her uncovered head. She is seated in profile facing to her right. Her hands are crossed on her lap, holding the bottom of her scroll. She wears a Greek *chiton*, like the other Sibyls here, but more correctly, it has no tailored sleeves attached, her left lower arm, nearest the observer, being bare, perhaps to indicate her youth and beauty. The other arm is chastely covered by her cloak. [See picture opposite]

Attributes: A crown. See note on Sibyl 4.

Text:

**DABIT VERO AD VERBERA SIMPLICITER SANCTUM DORSUM ET
COLLAPHOS ACCIPIENS TACEBIT.**

*Truly, he will give his honest, holy back blows, and will receiving wallops, he
will remain silent. (Lactantius: Div. Inst. IV.18, p. 293.)*

At Siena this is in the mouth of the Libyan Sibyl. This Sibyl at Rimini is definitely not in terms of costume, the later, mistaken, version of the Libyan Sibyl. Another Sibyl is clearly seen wearing her wreath in the lower series on this pillar.



Rimini: Sibyl 8 with side view of Sibyl 9, probably the Libica

BOTTOM ROW OF RIGHT HAND PILLAR:

SIBYL 8: PROBABLY THE DELPHIC SIBYL:

Appearance: The figure is virtually the same as the figures on the left of the top and bottom rows of the left hand pillar, an aged woman with long, loose locks. She could be the same person in a different pose. This time however, her hair is being blown by a wind coming from her right. She is seated facing slightly to her right but her head turns to her left, as though to keep her face out of the blast of the wind. The wind could be symbolic inspiration.²⁷⁵

Attribute: In her right hand she holds a long horn. This may indicate that she is the Delphic Sibyl. The Baldini series of engravings made in the early 1470s, the Barbieri woodcuts published in 1482, the same year as the Sibyls were put on the floor of Siena Cathedral, and that floor itself, all show the Delphic as the only Sibyl holding a horn. The Baldini engravings, both fine and broad manner, are particularly similar to this figure. [See picture opposite.] This implies that although the Sibyls at Rimini are un-named, there was somewhere a written source with attributes and names, possibly the one compiled by Valturio for Rimini.

It seems very likely therefore that this Sibyl was intended as the Sibilla Delphica. The Barbieri woodcuts render the horn as terminating in flowers and leaves, like a cornucopia, and on the floor of the Cathedral, flames seem to issue from the top, though the linear style is ambiguous and these may be leaves. The Revello list says of the Delphica, *in manu cornu tenen*.²⁷⁶ Thus, we can be sure that this became part of the canonical view of what was essential to her appearance.

²⁷⁵ Wind is a Christian trope for the breath of the Holy Spirit, giving divine guidance.

²⁷⁶ 'Holding a horn in her hand.'

I do not, however, know the reason why the Delphic Sibyl is shown holding the horn. In the Baldini engraving, the horn looks very like a musical instrument. Trumpets have an association with the Sibyl, at least since Thomaso di Celano wrote the *Dies Irae*. The section of his poem, *tuba mirum*, comes shortly after the announcement that the world is to be consumed by fire, as *teste David cum Sibilla*.²⁷⁷ It may be that the Delphica is perceived as the Sibyl heralding the end of the world and that a trumpet is therefore a suitable attribute but if so, this has little to do with the prophecy put into her mouth at Rimini.

I have so far been unable to trace, either in classical Literature or in the writings of the Fathers, the origin of this particular attribute.

Text:

IPSA HENIM INSIPIENS GENS [TUUM] DEUM NON INTELLEXISTI
LUDENTEM MORTALIUM MENTIBUS SED SPINI CORONASTI ET
HORRIDUM FEL MISCUISTI.

*Your own stupid race itself has not understood your God, playing / shining in
the minds of mortals but has crowned Him with thorns and mixed nauseous gall
for him. (Lactantius: Div. Inst. IV 18, p. 294.)*²⁷⁸

SIBYL 9: POSSIBLY THE LIBYAN SIBYL

Appearance: This Sibyl has the leafy garland on her head, characteristic of the Sibilla Libica in other cycles where the Sibyls are named. I name her here only tentatively since she could be a rendering of the Erithraean Sibyl before the costume described by Constantine and Eusebius as belonging to her, got transferred to the Libyan Sibyl in these cycles. The face is that of a woman becoming old. She has long locks almost to her waist, like the other old women in this cycle. This is unusual since uncovered unrestrained hair is more usually

²⁷⁷ As witness, or testify, King David and the Sibyl.

²⁷⁸ In view of the parallel with the Siena Quotation, I think that the 'd' in *ludentem* is a mistake and that this should really read *lucentem* which makes much more sense.



Rimini: Sibyl 9: possibly the Sibilla Libica since she wears a leafy wreath

the mark of very young girls. Like the other Sibyls, she wears a *chiton* and a *himation*. She sits with her legs towards her left, her feet resting on two shallow steps, the right foot on the lower of these. Her right hand supports her scroll and her left rests on her left knee. Her face gazes straight out at the observer.

Attribute: Her leafy head garland. This is the first appearance of the garland on the head of the Libyan Sibyl, and suggests that Roberto Valturio may have been the humanist who looked into the source material for her appearance and found it in Eusebius's sermon attached to his *Life of Constantine*. Many subsequent Libyan Sibyls are thus garlanded. She appears in this manner in both the Baldini engravings and the Barbieri woodcuts. The garland also appears at Siena. [See pictures opposite and on the following pages.]

The confusion of costume between the Libyan and Erythraean Sibyls

We know that the iconographer at Rimini has put this Sibyl in clothes which fit the description of the **Erythraean** Sibyl, with the garland and the snakes and tripod given by Constantine / Eusebius in the early fourth century AD. However, here at Rimini, the garlanded Sibyl is taken by Ricci to be the Libyan.²⁷⁹ This presumably is on the basis that all similarly clad in subsequent cycles, are only ever identified as the Libyan. We cannot however, in the absence of names on these statues, be quite sure that the same mistake was made here in using Eusebius's description of the clothes of the Erythraean Sibyl for the Libyan, since the Sibyl's name is absent. That may have been a later error made by subsequent cycles.

Text:

**ET TUNC AB INFERIS REGRESSUS AD LUCEM VENIET PRIMUS
RESURRECTIONIS PRINCIPIO REVOCATIS OSTENSO**

*Then, having returned from Hell, he shall be the first to come to the light,
showing the beginning of Resurrection. (Lactantius: Div. Inst. IV.19, p. 298.)*

²⁷⁹ Ricci, pp. 491 and 496.

THE INTRODUCTION OF PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES



Rimini: Sibyl 9: Probably the Sibilla Libica: note the leafy garland on her head



The Baldini Sibilla Libica with leafy garland engraved 17 years after the Sibyls at Rimini.

THE DEVELOPING TRADITION OF PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES



Compare the Rimini garlanded Sibilla Libica (1454-5) with that of Siena below (1482) The garland becomes canonical



Rimini: Sibyl 10

This is a version of the Siena Sibilla Cumea's or Cimmerian Sibyl's oracle.

SIBYL 10

Appearance: This is a young woman seated facing the front. Her head is slightly turned to her left. Her head is uncovered and her shoulder length hair is neatly parted in the middle with a tiny 'pony tail' at the back of the central parting at the crown of her head. She is the only Sibyl to be wearing a contemporary dress with a front opening at the neck and belted under the bust. It has tight sleeves. She wears a cloak or *himation*, like the other Sibyls, over her shoulders and lap.

Attribute: She holds a book in her hand. She has a 'pony-tail' hair style. This is the last of the Sibyls at Rimini. The holding of a Sibylline Book in the hand is a conventional symbol not requiring explanation but the pony tail is cause for remark. This strange little quirk of hair adornment may seem insignificant, yet it is one of the most interesting features of the design of this series. This is because this apparent trifle is repeated with such care in the designs for Sibyls that appear in the Baldini engravings, possibly taken from play costumes either for Belcari's *Annunciation*, produced in Florence in 1471, or some similar Sibyl play. [See picture opposite] The Sibilla Cumana is there seen sporting just this strange tail. What interests us at this point however is that there too, there is a careful and studied repetition of the bizarre topknot at Siena. It will be noted however, that the name of the Sibyl has been changed: on the floor she is no longer the Sibilla Cumana, but the Sibilla Hellespontica. The whole question of the Sibyls at Siena coming on, as it were, in the wrong garments, will be addressed later. Here it is perhaps sufficient to say that there is a pictorial connection between those designing theatre costumes, and intaglio work in Florence and the Sibyls of Rimini on the basis of this strong resemblance in both Classical clothing, attributes and hair style. After all, if commissioned to design a sequence of theatrical costumes, it would make sense to inspect a pre-existing work, and perhaps speak to the designer or read his archive.

Text:

**TEMPLI VERO VELUM SCINDETUR ET MEDIO DIE NOX ERIT ATRA
NIMIS IN TRIBUS HORIS ET MORTE MORIETUR TRIBUS DIEBUS SOMNO
SUSCEPTO.**

*The veil of the Temple shall be rent, and mid-day will be night with darkness,
exceeding great, for three hours... (the next part of the quotation is found in the
next Sibylline utterance in the same chapter in Lactantius)...And death having
been undergone, he shall sleep the sleep of death for three days. (Lactantius:
Div. Inst. IV.19, pp. 296-7.)*

1481-1482: SIENA

TEXT

Only three of the Siena oracles appeared on the walls of the Orsini palace. Those three do not take their origin from Lactantius. They are the oracles of the Erythraean, (source unknown to me) Tiburtine (possibly Italic folk tradition, the story of Augustus and the Sibyl) and Cumana (not from Lactantius but Virgil). These three Sienese Sibyls share both quotation and attribution with the Orsini Sibyls and nothing with Rimini, whose oracles are all taken directly or indirectly from Lactantius.

The oracles of the remaining seven Sienese Sibyls, however, can be found at Rimini but they are all in the mouths of different Sibyls. Rimini and Siena evidently share source material that is quite separate from the core documents and textual tradition of the Sibyl sites everywhere else in Italy, although they are part of the quattrocento genre of Sibyl cycles in the selection of the ten individual Sibyls and in the manner of rendering them visually.

Whoever designed the order in which the Sibyls were to appear on the floor at Siena was not influenced by the Lactantian /Varronian order. If there were an organising principle, it was likely to be thematic: based on the content of the oracles.

Siena was of such great artistic and architectural prominence that the genre traversed the borders of the peninsula and appeared in other European countries after it was constructed. It can therefore be regarded as the most important work in the Italian genre. As such it will be given large space for a very detailed study in the last chapter of this dissertation. Here the relationship of its text to Rimini is recorded for the sake of clarity and consistency, the two cycles of carved Sibyls having a special relationship as to textual content.

**SECTION I: (CONTINUED) SIBYL CYCLES
BEFORE THE ADVENT OF THE PRINTED
IMAGE**

**CHAPTER III: MOUNTAIN SIBYLS BEFORE
THE PRINTED IMAGE**

**THE SIBYLS OF THE MOUNTAIN VALLEYS OF
PIEDMONT AND LOMBARDY: SIBYLS UNDER
CHURCH ARCHES**

CHAPTER III: MOUNTAIN SIBYLS BEFORE THE PRINTED IMAGE

We now turn to a group of Sibyls cycles in the valleys of North and North Western Italy that I have come to believe had an independent origin, in church liturgy and drama and the pagan folklore of the region, although early in their history they adopt the established Orsini canonical text. Although appearing in Italy at about the same time as the Orsini-influenced Cycles, they are less a manifestation of early Humanist, Classical interests, more a continuation of Mediaeval Church practice with an embedded sub-structure of pagan folk belief. This is a region where there were real, practicing Sibyls co-existent with Christianity certainly as late as the sixth century AD and possibly beyond that time. This is commemorated in their frescos. The frescos are also substantially influenced by French culture, unlike the Orsini paintings. These cycles are found in the valleys of Piedmont, near to France, ruled at the time of their design, by a dynasty intermarrying with the French aristocracy. The Lombardy frescos are later than those of Piedmont but clearly belong to the same group, having exactly the same form.

Unlike the Orsini Sibyls, the frescos are never in a domestic setting. They are only found in churches, where they seem to augment, or possibly record, community performances of Sacred Drama and provide a visual setting for the Liturgy of the Sibyl. A full text of that Liturgy can be found in Appendix 7.

As well as differing in location, these Piedmontese Sibyl Cycles differ in the manner in which they are presented; they are normally half-figures or head and shoulder pictures rather than full figures and they are not life-sized. They are also, almost universally, painted on the flat surfaces under the major arches of the church. The only exceptions are the first cycle, Brossasco (c.1450-60) and the last, Saluzzo (1507).

Sibyl frescos in fifteenth-century French-influenced Piedmont were not a cultural intervention as they were in Rome, reinstating long forgotten Classical images. In this part of

the peninsula, such images did not need rediscovery and reassertion. Sibyls may never have disappeared from the cultural consciousness since pagan times.

There was an ambivalence in the Church and in the non literate laity about the status of Sibyls. They were not simply Literary. In his day, St Benedict (*c.* 480-*c.* 547), long after the conflict between Jerome and Augustine, still had face-to-face aggressive encounters with the ‘Sibylla Hecate’, in the pagan shrine he eventually razed to the ground. They are seen as both Heralds of Christianity and manifestations of the pagan Hell-hag, Hecate, who, many of the laity believed, must still be covertly placated. This ambivalence is reflected in the iconography of the frescos in Piedmont.

This continuity of pagan elements preserved in the folk culture, running parallel with the official, orthodox form of Christianity has always been a problem for the Church. There were two ways of dealing with pagan practices. They could be energetically suppressed, in which case a corresponding energy was engendered in those who participated in the rites. Alternatively, the central, popular elements could be absorbed and Christianised. Northern Italy was certainly not the only part of the old Roman Empire where folk religion preserved its pagan past, and where the church attempted to Christianise popular religion. The Rite of the Sibyl can be seen in this light.

Painted Sibyls in Piedmont are an expression of the continuity of traditional beliefs, expressed in community drama and religious rites as well as frescos, rather than a bold new statement about the status of Classical Literature by aristocratic Humanists. At first in Piedmont, we see what seem to be independent sources of text. However, this is very soon taken over by a submission to the ‘canonical’ version of the utterances of the Sibyls, under the Humanist influence coming from Rome. What seems to have happened, was that once the genre was recognised as a regular iconographic trope in the churches of Piedmont, comparisons were made with the aristocratic genre to the South and East, and discussions about sources and canonical text were influential. The Orsini version of the appropriate text

then became almost universal in painted cycles, but not its characteristic domestic setting or its form.

THE FRESCOS AS DRAMA AND PORTRAITS

Piccat cites Griseri, and expresses the luminous idea that the labels above the heads of the Sibyls and the swirling scrolls, were taken from the *mis en scene* of the sacred drama of the time in the Saluzzo / Cuneo region.²⁸⁰ Of course, it is unlikely to be the case that the drama invented this mode of portraying Sibyls. We see exactly such a presentation in the sculptures of Giovanni Pisano, carved in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. The scroll is the perfect visual image for ancient wisdom preserved in writings.

Continental Europe did not have the same attitude to women performers as was general in England. Indeed, there is often an overpowering impression in these mountain valley churches that the Sibyls are individual likenesses of very pretty young girls, in the local parish, dressed in their best and very expensive finery. These frescos may be preserving for posterity living models who played the parts of Sibyls in the Sacred Plays which were part of the religious culture of the region.

Both at Luserna and at Bienno the Sibyls are exactly such individuals. No attempt is made to align the appearance of these lovely girls with the aged hags that some of the Classical Sibyls famously were. The delight in these amateur aristocratic actresses, if that is what they were, is their beauty, elegance and glamour.

Within these valleys of the North Western mountains, there are two ways of rendering Sibyls that co-exist. One is heavily reminiscent of some forms of French mediaeval pictorial art, very two dimensional and set against a plain single coloured background, like Bizzozero, (1498). The other style is wholly Italian, more rounded and modern in execution, aware of

²⁸⁰ See Marco Piccat, "La Rappresentazione delle Sibille nel Saluzzese e nelle Zone Circostanti", in *Bollettino della Società per gli Studi Storici, Archeologici ed Artistici della Provincia di Cuneo*, no. 77, 2° Semestre 1977., p. 23.

CONVENTIONAL IMAGES

The French Mediaeval manner of Sibyls in Piedmont and Lombardy



Bizzozero 1498



Valgrana c. 1460-70s

the rules of perspective, but limited in the manner in which it sees Sibyls. In fact it gives no mind to the nature of Classical Sibyls at all, but uses the trope as an excuse to take painterly delight in pretty young girls. Bienno (1493) is a clear example of that.

The presence of two such differing modes is not to do with the date of the frescos. Even though to the casual observer one mode appears, 'Mediaeval', the other 'Renaissance', one should be very careful not to make assumptions about date: the styles co-exist.

The cycles that have a surface appearance of being earlier, eschewing the developing Renaissance knowledge of anatomy and perspective, at their best, have a vigour and truth to personality type reminiscent of Chaucer. At its worst, the 'mediaeval' French style can resort to an almost playing card, two-dimensional banality (see Bizzozzero). The best of mediaeval vigour and energy may be seen at Brossasco (c. 1450-60) and Valgrana (1460s-70s) These cycles surpass the portraits of pretty girls, however technically sophisticated, in making points about human nature. As well as the rich, young and elegant, they feature horrible hags with huge personalities and much to say. [See picture opposite.]

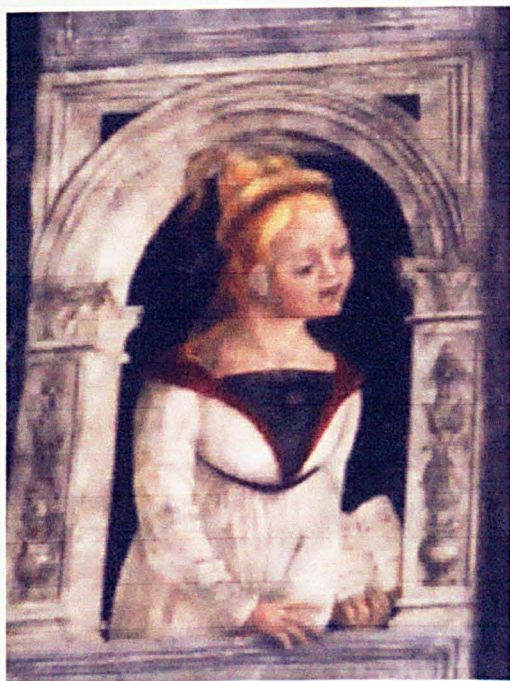
The second mode, more advanced in technique, has a more limited spiritual and psychological range. That is not to say the enterprise is worthless, it has different aims. Examples of that mode can be found at Luserna (c. 1450) and at Bienno (c. 1493). At its best, at Bienno, the second mode shows the beginnings of highly individual portraits: a perfectly valid artistic enterprise. [See picture overleaf.] The 'earlier' cycles however, show a real engagement with the nature of Sibyls and of prophecy and a concern with the fate of Mankind. At Bienno there are no such concerns. The plays may have dealt with serious eschatological issues, but what we see there are actresses. They are local beauties, glowing with health and happiness and in their party frocks.

CONVENTIONAL PRETTY GIRLS OR INDIVIDUAL PORTRAITS

The Italian Renaissance manner of Sibyls in Piedmont and Lombardy



Saluzzo 1507



Bienno 1493



Brossasco: Location of three of the Sibyls showing stairs intersecting the fresco



Brossasco: Fragment: possibly: '**S**ibilla Hellispontica' on the outer encircling scroll and fragments of, '**I**hesus Christus **n**ascetur de Casta,' the probable oracle on the inner scroll

1450-60 BROSSASCO

The base of the campanile in the parish Church (Painter not known)

This is the earliest site we know of in Piedmont. There could be no more convincing justification of this study, if one were needed, than the sad fate of the Sibyls of Brossasco. They were irremediably damaged in 1962, and as far as I am aware, no photographic record exists. A homemade concrete stairway was inserted, diagonally across the fifteenth-century frescos, chiselling into the wall and surface to fix it to the underlying masonry.

Marco Piccat attests that with great difficulty he can descry the names of four of them: Samia, Helesp(ontica), Persica and Europa.²⁸¹ Sadly, even more radical deterioration must have taken place since the seventies when he wrote his article, as my photographic record of the present state of preservation makes clear. [See pictures opposite] It is no longer possible to descry any names.

Nonetheless, from the much damaged evidence before us today, it is possible to learn some things about the genre in the Saluzzo region in Piedmont where these Cycles are found. These Sibyls are not full figure representations. They are head and shoulder renderings in tondi.²⁸² The text of oracles at Brossasco is on scrolls forming the boundaries of the tondi. The two remaining Sibyl heads that are still discernable are both in profile looking to the right.

The Sibyls are located at the base of the bell tower in the church. This seems to have been a chapel richly decorated with frescos, Sibyls are below, prophesying the advent of Christ, above, there are frescos on the theme of the nativity and childhood of Jesus, and

²⁸¹ See Piccat, p. 22.

²⁸² The tondo form is rare in the area. Oddly, the first and the last cycle (Saluzzo, 1507) are the only ones not to be painted under arches and both place their Sibyls in tondi. Saluzzo, however, whilst in the region, cannot truly be counted as part of this subgenre, since its setting is domestic and the Sibyls are not under an arch. It is more properly regarded as a poor offshoot of the Borgia Sibyls mode.



Brossasco: Sibyl in white wimple



Brossasco: Sibyl with long blonde hair whose rosy profile can be seen directly at the top of the picture facing left and slightly upward. The letters, 'mia' can perhaps be seen at the end of her name on the boundary (top right). If so, she may be the Samia

perhaps echo the original dedicatory name of the church. The chapel once opened onto the church through a gothic arch. This has been filled in. Entrance is now through the Sacristy. Seven tondi survive. There may have been more but there is no space for more than ten.

One of the heads on the staircase wall can be made out. She has a clear face in a bold linear style. The picture is of a middle aged woman, wearing a white wimple, not at all bland or beautiful but full of character and very definitely with something to say. She is reminiscent one of the strong characters at Valgrana, hardly any distance away, painted some ten years later. They are late mediaeval women, confident and strong, like those encountered in Chaucer, in the time of their grandmothers. [See picture opposite.] There is one other discernable head, the forehead, nose and eyes remain with traces of luxuriant blonde hair hanging down her back. I am reminded of the Sibilla Eritrea at Valgrana. She is perhaps another Sibyl whose name may be indicated if the remaining letters are indeed '*mia*' in the remnant of her name. This would mean that she were the Sibilla Samia. If that is so and I am right in discerning the word, '*pace*', peace, in the oracle, then one can say that her oracle has not come from the Samia's oracle on the canonical list, the one piece of information to throw light on the more general concerns of this study. There are no other discernable words left at Brossasco. [See following pages]

1450-60 LUSERNA SAN GIOVANNI

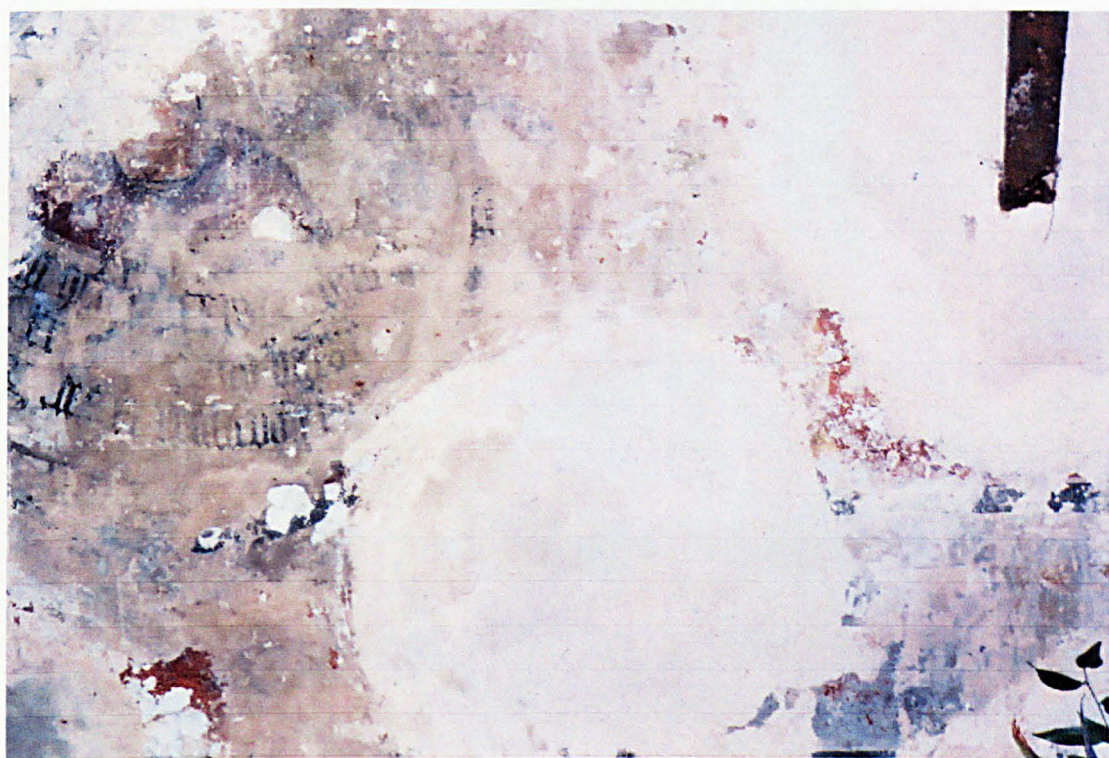
The left transept of the parish Church of San Giacomo

Strangely, the remains of this cycle of Prophets and Sibyls are visible only from the outside of the church. They are on the underside of a gothic arch, which used to constitute the entry to the left transept, before radical alterations removed the transepts and converted this to a hall church in the sixteenth century.²⁸³ There remain now, two Sibyls on the right and two prophets on the left. They were discovered during building work in the autumn and

²⁸³ See Picatt, p. 22.



Brossasco: Fragment showing the word 'Sibilla'



Brossasco: Fragment showing body, scroll and obliterated text



Brossasco: Fragment of scroll



Brossasco: Fragment



Luserna San Giovanni: Sibilla Delficha and a fragment of another Sibyl. The photograph, taken from below, shows the hinged glass panel, let into the external wall, covering the space excavated to show the underside of the pre-existing arch.

winter of 1970-71.²⁸⁴ They are seen high up, as glass covered alcoves let into the white external wall. They are the earliest example of half figures set into rectangular frames of which I am aware. [See picture opposite]

TEXT

The best-preserved inscription is that of Isaiah, (Isaiah 7.14), the lower of the two prophet pictures: [See picture overleaf.]

**Ecce virgo concipiet et pariet filum (sic) et vacabitur (sic) nomen eius
Emanuel.**

*Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son: and shall call his name
Immanuel.*

The oracle of the lower Sibyl is only preserved in part, *Flagelabit Deus potentes....* This appears in the canonical list but it is ascribed to the Sibilla Phrygia. In the Passion play of Revello this quotation is also attributed to the Sibilla 'Frigia'. I suspect, from what remains visible that the Orsini quotation is varied only by the substitution of the Virgin's personal name for the word *virgo*:

**Flagelabit deus / potentes / terre ex olimpo excelsus veniet et firmabitur
concilium in celo et annunciabitur Maria in vallibus desertorum.**

Visible sections are marked in bold type.

Whoever has designed this has a special love of the name, *Maria*, as witness the oracle on the Sibyl above.

The inscription related to the upper Sibyl, whose name is missing at the top of the painting, can be clearly seen, apart from some missing letters at the very beginning:

?di Christus, filius Dei, nascetur di Virgine Maria.

²⁸⁴ See Piccat, p.22.



Luserna San Giovanni: A Prophet, with the remnants of an oracle above

In the picture, some of the inscription is obscured by the thickness of the right hand wall.

The only oracle that names the Virgin, as found in the Revello list, which usually gives the fullest versions of the oracles, is that of the Tiburtina. This appears to be a very small part of that quotation. However, the allocation of names to oracles is not the same as that in the canonical list, as can be observed from the Sibyl directly below. This series is very early in the history of the genre, and a very long way from Rome. The source of the oracle is not Varro or Lactantius. The personal name of Mary was not mentioned in any of the oracles on the Orsini wall. The only word remaining at the end of the scroll in the hand of the upper Prophet is also *Maria*.

The Iconographic Context

It must not be forgotten that these paintings were not meant to be viewed from outside the church. They were designed to work with a whole series of other paintings adorning the inside of the church, which must have made it a brilliant jewel box, like Valperga. In some ways, the seventeenth-century ‘improvements’ are deeply to be regretted. However, some fifteenth-century frescos survive at the back of one of the side altars on the right hand side of the church, when one faces the altar. There is a great deal of text and the general topic seems to be ‘right doctrine’, as delineated by the early Fathers of the Church. This association of the theme of orthodoxy with the ancient wisdom of the Sibyls is encountered often in the region, extensively at Valgrana. The repeated local collocation of these subjects is evidence of a huge desire to instruct the faithful in the right, traditional, orthodox way.

The Artistic Style

The lower panels on both sides are almost completely preserved whereas the tops of the upper panels, originally showing the names, are now destroyed.

The Delphic Sibyl is the lower of the two Sibyl panels. She is portrayed with what has probably been a graceful flower in her hand, the detail of this is now somewhat faded. She is

an exceptionally beautiful young woman, with a delicate complexion brought out by the contrast with her double string of black pearls. She has luxuriant long blonde hair, like the Sibyl at Brossasco. At the time, and for many decades thereafter, blonde hair was considered deeply attractive in Italy.²⁸⁵ There is an intelligent beauty and unaffected innocence here that is very difficult to achieve and very moving. The details of the wonderful silk, damask and expensive white lawn on the costumes of the Sibyls are painted with an unconcealed enjoyment. The scrolls are ribbon-like and fly out, unrolling away from the bodies. The names are beautifully written in red letter.

Fragments of other, upper figures are still visible: a Sibyl is placed above the Delphica and another prophet above Isaiah.²⁸⁶ The lower portions of other figures can be seen, however both of these figures are incomplete. The head and name of the second, upper Sibyl is missing as the plaster has fallen away leaving exposed brick. This Sibyl is dressed very elegantly in a gold and crimson damask gown cut close to the body but with ample lawn sleeves with cuffs matching the bodice. On the other side above the Prophet Isaiah, is the lower portion of a man dressed in a houppelande with wide sleeves trimmed with fur.

The dimensions of the arch indicate that only about three or four pictures can have been on the surface at each side if the paintings were only on the portion above the capitals, as is usual in this part of Piedmont. It is not known whether there were other arches painted with Sibyls and prophets, since some parts of the complex of ecclesiastical buildings here have been demolished.

²⁸⁵ See, Christopher Hibbert, *The Rise and Fall of the House of Medici* (London: Allen Lane, 1974), pp. 98-99. Lucrezia Tournabuoni, in a private letter, boasts that Clarice Orsini (1453-1487), soon to be the wife of Lorenzo the Magnificent, cannot possibly be expected to be as beautiful or accomplished as her own (blonde) daughters. This might be a portrait of just such a daughter. St Clare, cousin of St Francis, was held a celebrated beauty on account of her long blonde hair.

²⁸⁶ Piccat is mistaken in saying that they alternate. Clearly Prophets were on one side, Sibyls on the other.

There is no secure attribution to an artist. However, the style is transitional as between the linear, rather flat, almost caricatured technique displayed at Brossasco and a fully developed Renaissance style using perspective. The figures are rounded and have weight and presence. The face of the Delphica is wonderful, but the hands of the upper figure are rendered more perfunctorily, in a manner reminiscent of Brossasco. This could of course, indicate co-operation between a master painting the face and an apprentice other parts of the fresco.²⁸⁷

LATE 1460S-1470S VALGRANA: CHURCH OF SAN MARTINO

There are two sets of frescos in Valgrana which together give meaning to the presence of the Sibyl fresco: the fresco itself, painted in the 1460s but entirely covered up some forty years later, and the wayside chapel where three roads meet, painted at the same time by the same artist, which asserts orthodoxy and Right Doctrine. There is a symbiotic relationship between the two sites placed so closely together which is a commentary on, and an expression of, the ambivalence of the Church towards Sibyls. The significance of the Sibyls in the church in this part of Piedmont cannot be read without reference to the chapel.

This was the time of the rise of Torquemada. There is a dynamic relationship between the iconography of Church and Chapel. The hypothesis is, that the status and meaning of Sibyls in the folk culture were different and in opposition to their status and meaning in the High Culture and that the two cultures were in dynamic tension in Italy at the time.

²⁸⁷ It is tempting to consider that this may be the work of the 'Maestro de Lucerum', who is said to have painted the Sibyl Room at Albenga. However, when the paintings are compared that seems impossible. These are altogether more technically accomplished. They have depth, mass, and an accomplished technique far beyond that of the Bishop's palace. They also have an enormous charm as an expression of breathing feminine beauty, far beyond the scope of the flat and slightly diagrammatic renderings in Albenga. If 'Lurerum' indicates Lucerna, Albenga was painted by another master from the town.

Effectively, these images convey the idea that unorthodox pagan practices, preserved in superstition and folk religion were illicit, damaging and were to be suppressed. However, the study of Classical art and Literature was permitted if it strengthened the faith. The interpretative method has to be elliptical, setting the images into their cultural context, understanding what they symbolise and taking careful note of the underlying principles of selection and collocation.

There is nothing in the interior of the Church at Valgrano to indicate the presence of fifteenth-century Sibyl frescos. It appears both externally and internally to be a sixteenth-century church. That is, until one notices the remnant of a fourteenth-century crucifixion, low down in the left hand corner of the west wall. It then becomes clear that the Church has been subject to extensive restoration in the sixteenth century. Apart from some portions of the west wall, the whole church has been, so to speak, encased. A patron at the beginning of the sixteenth century brought it in line with modernity. At core, a thirteenth-century building, each of the bays of the side aisles has been converted to a side chapel, where plaster images of warrior saints are placed. Its high, pointed arches have been eliminated by the stratagem of putting in a false, lower ceiling. To see the dramatic and honestly painted images of the Sibyls, one must climb into the rubble in the space between the false ceiling and the thirteenth-century roofline.²⁸⁸ The four remaining Sibyls are of wonderful colour and freshness since they were covered from any light source some thirty years after they were painted. They richly reward the struggle to find them.

Visual Impact: Costume and Style

These Sibyls are wonderful. They have the freshness of the Canterbury Pilgrims, a Chaucerian strength of character and individuality. Whilst they represent Sibyls, they are also strong contemporary personalities and we should read them as such. They are like characters in a drama. They may indeed be related to a particular dramatic performance and

²⁸⁸ The kindness of Signora Marisa Palumbo in aiding me in every way, I much appreciate.

Valgrana: Church: the crone-like Sibyl on the right of the arch.



bear a sly relationship to the persons chosen to play the parts, just as portraits were sometimes carved in corbels.

There are two complete Sibyls left at the apex of the arch. Underneath each picture is the relevant oracle and under that is the name of the Sibyl in red letter. Below the complete Sibyls are pictures of third and fourth Sibyls. However, in the case of the lower Sibyls the quotations and names have been lost, buried in the rubble that rests on the top of the new roof. I removed some of this, pulling away the larger lumps but was afraid to proceed in case I damaged the structure of the ceiling on which I lay. My impression was that the lower inscriptions and Sibyls had been destroyed, but this may not be correct. Photography is difficult since it has to be done by lying in the thick dust and rubble in order to get under the arch to get a straight view of the pictures. When there, one is very close to the frescos and a distorted image may still result.

The style is Mediaeval rather than Renaissance, with bold flowing lines. It does not play with perspective or present the figures in any kind of scene. They appear against a flat blue background. The costume is very interesting since, whilst the young and beautiful Sibyls are in gorgeous, expensive aristocratic dress, conventional in the fifteenth-century Sibyl cycle, the furious old hag, giving tongue at the bottom on the right, wears more modest garb, including what appears to be an apron.

The Individual Sibyls

This lower right figure is striking. She has a startling, vivid, crone's face. She leans on a stick, like the Sibyl presumed to be the Delphica, at the Casa Romei. [See picture opposite] There are two likely identities. The Revello Passion connection was pointed out by M. Peroti.²⁸⁹ If we pursue this, she may well have been the Frigia who is there described as, *Sibilla Frigia, valde antiqua, induta veste rubea, nudis brachijs, antiqua facie saturnine*,

²⁸⁹ M. Peroti, 'Il "Maestro del Villar"', *Cuneo Provincia Granda*, XVII, part 2 (1968), pp. 30-31



Valgrana: Church: Sibilla Eritrea

*crinibus sparsis per dorsum, digito indicans, dicet sic...*²⁹⁰ This is true in every particular, save that she has covered arms.

However, my instincts suggest that this must be the Sibyl at Cumae. The Edinburgh MS. describes that Sibyl as follows:

Sibilla Cumana cum baculo senissima.

The Sibyl of Cumae with a stick, very old:

That is what we see here.²⁹¹ It is certainly possible that this aged, angry crone, so vividly painted, represents that Sibyl.

SIBILLA ERITREA

The Sibyl above her, in the apex of the arch, is in striking contrast. [See picture opposite] She is young, virginal and beautiful, with long blonde hair, hanging loosely down her back. Here she is named as the **Sibilla Eritrea**. The picture is strongly reminiscent of what remains of the blonde Sibyl at Brossasco. The loose hair indicates a *fanciulla*, a young girl of about fifteen, on the eve of maturity. The Revello manuscript says that the Europa is fifteen years old.²⁹² This Sibyl speaks the oracle of the canonical Europa.²⁹³

²⁹⁰ 'Sibilla Frigia: very old, wearing a red dress with her arms uncovered, aged Saturnine face, thin hair hanging down her back, a pointing hand; she speaks thus...'.

²⁹¹ The Sibyl at Cumae was famous for her mistake in asking Apollo for the gift of eternal life but forgetting to ask for eternal youth. She became agonisingly aged. In Petronius's *Satyricon*, when the small boys ask her, 'Sibyl, what do you want?' the disillusioned Sibyl replies, 'I want to die'.

²⁹² The Edinburgh manuscript says twenty-five. However, the estimation of a woman's age from her appearance is highly subjective and always a matter for caution. We can be sure here that the woman is young.

²⁹³ This will be discussed more fully in the following section concerning text.



Valgrana: Church: Sibilla Libichia

Beneath her is the oblong label with her oracle in the most beautiful clear Gothic black letter and her name in red letter. This would evidently have been the repeated pattern for all the Sibyls here.

SIBILLA LIBICA

The Sibyl in the opposite position is slightly older, in her twenties. She has a bland, untroubled, calm face. The head is tilted up in expectation and is the opposite of the demure and drooping, modest head gesture that one commonly sees in paintings of the women of this period. This woman is not aiming to pass unnoticed. She wears very expensive French fashions. She wears a sleeveless *surcote*, with a high collar like an expensive *houppelande*. This is cut in two parts, the top or yoke, in cloth of gold, ending in a dentilled edging in cream. Below this, the bulk of the garment is in the richest of damasks, with a bold Eastern pattern, probably of stylised pomegranate, in gold and ruby. These damasks, after the explorations of Marco Polo more than a hundred years before, began to be imported from the east through Venice. This shines like silk and may be cloth of gold interwoven with burgundy silk. Coming through the slashed arm holes, the sleeves of the under dress are shown, they appear to be embroidered linen. She wears a white linen wimple. No hair whatever is seen; indeed, it may well have been shaved at the front to give the fashionable, noble, high forehead of this period. The most striking aspect of her costume is however her enormous hat. [See picture opposite.]

It seems to be a huge sun hat, made of twisted swathes of straw sewn together to make an enormous brim. The hat may well be indicative that she has travelled. Indeed, when one stops viewing her as the Italian model and recollects what this woman is purported to represent, she does indeed come from a very foreign land, the coasts of Libya. This is very odd given the excessively pale complexion, carefully cultivated by aristocratic women to show that they never did manual work in the sun. The image here in fact, is wholly contemporary, Franco-Italian.



Pisanello: Enormous Hat: detail from *Virgin and Child with St Anthony Abbot and St. George*, (c. 1435-41)

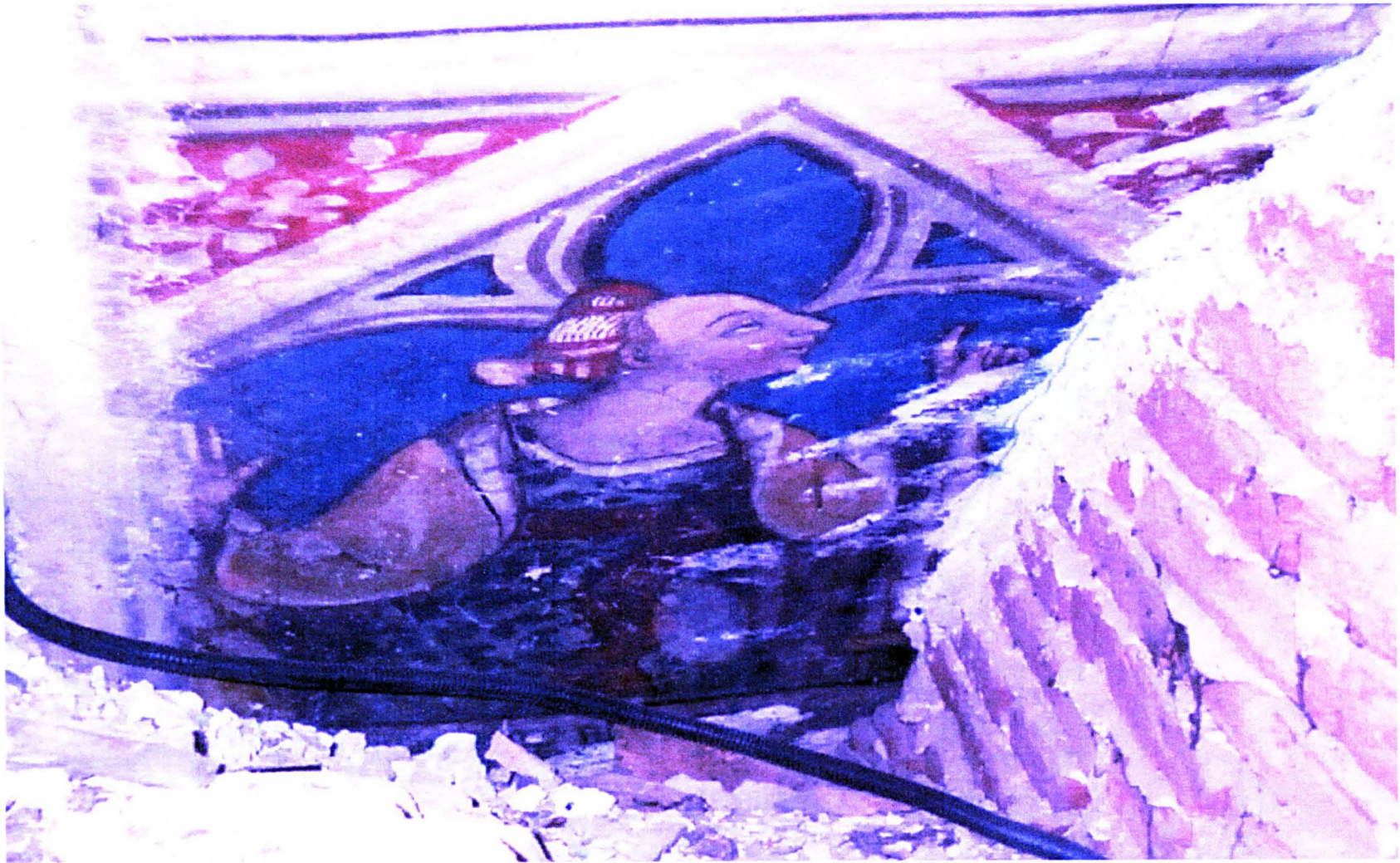
The hat is strange and certainly not Libyan. If we compare this picture with Pisanello's *Virgin and Child with St Anthony Abbot and St George*, (c. 1435-41), [See picture opposite] we find that on St George there rests an exactly similar headpiece. The connection may be in no sense a coincidence. No verifiable facts are known about St George; as early as the beginning of the sixth century he was referred to as a good man 'whose deeds are known only to God.'²⁹⁴ However, there is of course the unshakeable folk-myth about St George, the Maiden and the Dragon. The important thing about the fresco of the Libyan Sibyl is that the soldier Saint rescued the maiden at Silene in Libya. This led to the conversion and baptism of a thousand souls: an event preserved and popularised by *The Golden Legend*. The Libyan connection is very interesting. It may be that the broad-brimmed straw hat was worn by Europeans, soldiers and pilgrims, on their travels in the Holy Land and north Africa and that this extraordinary headgear had a particular pictorial significance, rather like that of the solar-topi to a modern audience. If this is so, a wide hat is understood to be the wise traveller's precautionary gear and has a longer duration than transient fashion. After all, the solar-topi lasted more than a hundred years. On the Valgrana 'Libyan Sibyl', there may well be a good humoured joke at work at the expense of a rich and well-travelled parishioner, like Chaucer's Wife of Bath.

THE LEFT HAND SIBYL WHOSE NAME IS OBSCURED

The last image we see is interesting because in my view it helps to identify the painter of this series and unites these frescos with those of the astonishing little chapel of SS. Bernardo and Mauro half a mile away. The similarity of this figure to that of Saint Christina in the Chapel is remarkable and helps to establish that the painter of both church and chapel was the same person. This relationship between frescos in church and chapel reveals the probable rhetorical purpose of the repetition of Sibyl cycles in churches in this river valley, the route to and from France. . [See picture overleaf]

²⁹⁴ See Donald Attwater, *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p. 148.

Valgrana: Church: Sibyl (no name) whose appearance is very like the painting of St. Christina in the wayside chapel



The whole cluster of Sibyl Cycles appearing in this area, at this time, must have had a didactic purpose. Even though competitive emulation between churches and patrons to some extent explains the spread of the motif, there must have been doctrinal content that needed for some reason to be asserted strongly at the time. This is one of the two earliest churches in the area, and thus represents the initial rhetorical impetus. In my view, this was the establishment and enunciation of orthodox doctrine in the face of pagan practices, placating the deities of roads and travelling, surviving in the folk culture. The reasons for this will be made plain in the following discussion of the iconography of the Chapel and its relation to the church.

Peroti, makes a comparison between the oracles here and the nearby Revello Passion Play.²⁹⁵ He dates these frescos between 1468 and 1478, a period when Carlo Domenico Saluzzo was parish priest.²⁹⁶ This connection with the drama is also true of the cycle at Valperga in the Chiesa di San Giorgio (1477) and at Piani, Imperia (1488). Now while the Revello Passion Play was not thought to be produced till 1490, the Laurentian manuscript seems to be citing an archaic original. The final redaction seems to be based on earlier drama infused with a local tradition of Sibyl Drama. It is perhaps on this that these inscriptions rest.

TEXT

SIBILLA ERITREA

Here it says:

Veniet ille et transsibit colles et montes et latices olimpi, et regnabit in paupertate et dominabitur in silencio at egredietur de utero virginis.

He will come and will cross valleys, mountains and Olympian heights. He will reign in poverty and will himself be governed remaining silent, being born of a virgin's womb.

²⁹⁵ Peroti, pp. 30-31

²⁹⁶ See Piccat, pp 24-26, f.n.32.

All contemporary manuscript descriptions assert that this oracle given to the Sibilla Eritrea here, was found on Cardinal Orsini's wall, but there it was attributed to the Sibilla Europa. This could be a scribal error at Valgrana, especially if the source manuscript used shortened forms as, for example, **ĒRĪPĀ**. We cannot now see the Europa's oracle at this site to see what substitution was effected there.

Olomouc

**Veniet ille et transibit colles et montes et latices olimpi regnabit in
paupertate et dominabitur in silencio et egredietur de utero virginis.**

SIBILLA LIBICA

The saying of the Sibilla Libica in Valgrano is substantially that of the same Sibyl on Cardinal Orsini's wall according to all contemporary manuscripts apart from one minor difference.

Tongerlo

**Ecce veniet dies et illuminabit dominus condensa tenebrarum et solventur
nexus synagoge et desinent labia hominum et vedebunt regem vivencium et
tenebit illum in gremio virgo domina gencium et regnabit in misericordia et
uterus matris eus erit statera cunctorum.**

In Valgrana however, we find:

Ecce veniet dies et illuminabit dominus condenssa (sic) tenebrarum et solventur
nexus sinagoge et desinent labia hominum et vedebunt regem viventium et
tenebit illum in gremio mater virgo et domina gentium et virtus eus erit statera
cunctorum.

'regnabit in misericordia et uterus matris' is removed and the word, *'virtus'* substituted and then the quotation continues in line with the Orsini words, *'eus erit statera cunctorum.'*

Comparison between the figure of the anonymous Sibyl in the church (left) and that of Saint Christina in the wayside chapel
Note the identity of style, the matching hat, yellow and silver cloak, green damask dress, scarlet belt, hand gesture and background design



This substitution may have been made simply to shorten the quotation because here the architectural space is very limited. However, this wording with 'virtus' substituting for the words, "*regnabit in misericordia et uterus matris*", is exactly the wording of the Edinburgh manuscript. This also substantially accords with what is left of the vernacular inscription of the prophecy of the Sibilla Libica at the Casa Romei in Ferrara. A detailed comparison is not possible because of the difference in languages and the very vitiated state of the words on the wall of the Casa Romei. As yet, this crux is unresolved.

The Artist

The artist is thought by Peroti to be the 'Maestro of Villar', i.e. Villar San Costanzo.²⁹⁷ These Sibyls are all dressed in French aristocratic high fashion of the last quarter of the 1400s. Carlo de Clercq attributes the Sibyls here at Valgrano to Pietro da Saluzzo.²⁹⁸ I agree with de Clercq, because of the connection between these painting and those of the wayside chapel, about a quarter of a mile away.

THE CHAPEL OF SS. BARNARDO AND MAURO AND ITS RELATION TO THE SIBYLS

The striking similarities in style and technique between the paintings hidden in the roof of the parish church and those so openly on view in this wayside chapel, can immediately be seen by comparing the lower left hand Sibyl in the church with Saint Christina, painted on the underside of the right hand arch, in the chapel. [See picture opposite.] The image is likely to have been produced by the artist having a pounced cartoon taken from the church profile of the Sibyl and applied to the chapel in reverse. The frescos in

²⁹⁷ For a bibliography of this artist see Marco Piccat. These Sibyls have also been attributed to the brothers Tommaso and Matteo Biasacci, of Busco, Cuneo, who are said to have painted the Sibyl cycle in Sta Maria Assunta at Piani, Imperia. I have certain doubts about that attribution. The fresco at Piani is signed by 'Thomas' alone and the Sibyls there lack any individual personality.

²⁹⁸ Carlo de Clercq, p.10.

the chapel are of the same date as those in the church. Those painted in the chapel are certainly the work of Pietro da Saluzzo. It would be very unlikely that if the two frescos were planned by the Church authorities to be executed at the same time, two different masters were employed in this small mountain town. The strong likelihood is that the commission for the church and chapel were given to the same artist. I find the evidence of the dates, together with the tremendous similarity in style and execution entirely convincing.

This however, is not primarily a study of art and artists, but rather a study of the symbolism, text and ideas. The focus of this work is to ask what symbolism and text are meant to convey, and why that was important at the time.

Iconography

Here, as at Luserna, as a counter to heresy, the Sibyls are related to other frescos whose text and pictures are concerned with Orthodox Doctrine, symbolised by the images of the Doctors of the Church, with the addition here of intellectual female Saints. Here in these remote valleys, a concern about orthodoxy seems not to be general and theoretical, but local and specific. The motive seems to be assertion of Catholic Doctrine as against folk religion of a quasi-pagan kind, survivals from the Italic pagan past.

In order to understand the iconography of the Chapel and thence how it relates to the Church and the Sibyls therein, we have to consider its location and construction, as well as its choice of personages and symbols.

The choice of Saints to adorn a chapel is dictated by what the iconographic scheme is intended to convey to a non literate culture. Thus, when attempting to account for the rhetoric of the images, an account of the life of each saint must be given, as it was understood by the culture at the time. Thus the common theme and the message the images were designed to convey can then be correctly understood.

The chapel is of a very peculiar kind. It is constructed having three open arches. It is not strictly a wayside chapel or shrine since it is placed at the meeting of three roads and



Valgrana: Location of Chapel



Valgrana: Chapel interior

indeed, may originally have straddled the road junction so that travellers were compelled to pass through it. Since then, the ground level has become slightly higher, the simple portico has been built in front of it and low side walls have been added. The road junction is now immediately in front of it. The frescos beneath the arches extend to the ground but these are now partially obscured by the later addition of the low walls. [See picture on the page opposite.] Originally however, a horse and cart could have passed under the arches, as it were, covered and surrounded by Right Doctrine as it went its way. Any ceremony conducted at the junction of the three roads would be enacted beneath the overarching images of the gospel writers and the four doctors of the Church and before an altar to the Virgin and Child. [See picture on the page opposite.]

Let us consider first the location of the Chapel and then its dedication to Saints Bernard and Mauro, and lastly the ideas conveyed by the selection of the particular female saints portrayed on the under faces of the arches.

Location: the place where three roads meet

The meeting of three roads has a numinous significance in Ancient Greek and Italic culture and myth. In order to understand this well, a short digression as a reminder of the significance of this in our shared mythic inheritance is perhaps helpful. Such a junction is a place of haunting, sacrifice and significant murder. Oedipus kills his father at the place where the three roads meet, roads from Corinth, his known origins, Thebes, his unknown origins, and Delphi, the place of his (partial) enlightenment. This symbolised powerfully, the point of the journey of life, not necessarily to happiness, but to understanding, and the limitations of the human will under destiny.

The story of Oedipus is an early embodiment of the symbol but the junction of three roads: past, present and future, *id*, *ego* and *super-ego*, Unconscious mind, Conscious mind and Understanding. However interpreted, it has gone on having a numinous significance in European culture. However, the task here, whether we be Freudians, Jungians or sceptics, is

to recognise that such places have significance in our European folk myth, and to determine what it meant in Valgrano in the 1460s and 70s.

There exists in all Christian countries, an unofficial sub-culture of quasi-religious folk traditions. It is however, old past Christianity. Our traditions are Celtic and Germanic. In the Italian peninsular they were and are Greek and Latin, and the point at which, 'three ways meet' is highly significant, as is the legendary account of the encounter between 'Sibylla Hecate' and St Benedict.

In late-mediaeval Italy, the Sibyls were understood in three main ways that existed in tension with each other. In the fifteenth-century dramas and church frescos the Sibyls were understood as heralds of hope and redemption. Earlier, there was the single Sibyl, annunciatrix of Doom, the coming of the Last Day, the final Judgement, she of the *Ordo Sibillarum*, '*Judicii Signum*'. Before, or at the same time as that, there were the oral traditions of the encounter between Saint Benedict and the Sibyl of the Monte Sibillini, in Norcia. In these legends the Sibyl was understood to be wholly pagan, a purveyor of ill, and a trap and snare to the virtue of a Christian. In fact, in the legend, she is almost a symbol of the continuing paganism in the remoter areas of the Italic peninsula. As a female quasi-immortal, concerned with the underworld, she is understood as synonymous with Hecate. Angela Rossi writes:²⁹⁹

²⁹⁹ Rossi, Angelina, 'Le Sibille nelle Arti Figurative Italiane', in *L'Arte*, Anno XVIII Fasc. IV, 1st August, 1915 p. 216.

TRANSLATION (my emboldening) The basilica of Sant'Angelo was built by the Benedictines at the foot of Monte Tifata, near Capua, in the time of Abbot Desiderio, in 1056, over a more modest church, which the piety of the leading Lombards had erected in honour of the Archangel Michael. We are in the same region of the Campania as the enduring traditions of the Cumana and the Cimmeria, and it is notable that Saint Benedict, alone among mortals, escaped the seductions of the Sibilla of Norcia. However, on the mountain on the slopes of which Saint Benedict constructed the famous abbey on the ruins of a temple of Apollo. not only Apollo was venerated in that region at the time. On

La basilica di Sant' Angelo fu edificata dai Frati di San Benedetto pie' del monte Tifata, presso Capua, dall'abate Desiderio intorno al 1056, sur una chiesa più modesta, che la pieta dei principi longobardi aveva innalzato in onore dell'arcangelo Michele.³⁰⁰ Siamo in quella terra di Campania, ove duravano le tradizioni della Cumana e della Cimmeria, ed è noto come San Benedetto, solo tra i mortali, sfuggisse alle seduzioni della Sibilla di Norcia. Sul monte a cui Cassino è nella costa San Benedetto costruizce la famosa badia sulle rovine di un tempio di Apollo. Ma non soltanto Apollo era ancora venerato in quella regione. Sulla cresta inferiore del monte sorgeva, in mezzo a un bosco, un'ara sacra a Venere. E presso la vicina di Capua era un tempio in onore di Diana, quello stesso sul quale sorsero prima la chiesa di San Michele, e poi la basilica di Sant'Angelo. La Venere, al cui bosco Benedetto appicca il fuoco, è Tutt'uno con la Sibilla di Norcia, alle cui mortali insidie egli riesce a sottrarsi, e con la Venere della leggenda del Tannhäuser? E sarebbe per avventura il primo germe de questa da ricercare non già tra I monti di Norcia,

a lower peak of the mountain in the middle of a wood there was an altar sacred to Venus. Also, near Capua was a temple in honour of Diana, the very same as that on which first the Church of San Michele and then the basilica of Saint Angelo were built. Is Venus, to whose wood Saint Benedict had set fire, one and the same as the Sibyl of Norcia, from whose mortal snares he had managed to escape, and the Venus of the legend of *Tannhäuser*? For the origins of this, perhaps it would be better to look again, not as before in the mountains of Norcia but in the hills of Cassino, from where the legend of the meeting between the Saint and the local Sibyl originates? Certainly the Diana of Sant'Angelo is Hecate who shared a cult with Apollo at Cumae. Hecate is the Goddess of the Abyss, which the popular imagination is easily able to associate with the *vermo reo*, overcome by the Archangel.

³⁰⁰ Churches built over a place of pagan worship, in Italy, in England and indeed the rest of Europe, were often dedicated to the Archangel Michael. It was he who cast out Satan from the Kingdom of Heaven. The protection of the Warrior Angel in casting out demons perhaps seemed necessary on such sites.

ma sul colle di Cassino, di dove sarebbe originata anche la leggenda del convigno del Santo con la Sibilla della sua terra? Certo la Diana di Sant'Angel é la Hecate che a Cuma ebbe culto insieme con Apollo, la dea dell'abisso, che la fantasia popolare potette facilmente legare al 'vermo reo', debellato dall'Archangelo.

The iconography of the Church and wayside Chapel at Valgrano demonstrates the Italian cultural ambivalence towards Sibyls in concrete form. Hecate, seen by St Benedict as embodied in the Sibyl in the mountain caves, was likely to have been a female prophetess of some kind, still operating a pagan shrine in his life-time (c. 480-547), just after the fall and dissolution of the Roman Empire. Christianity, made the official Roman religion by the Emperor Constantine in 313, was unlikely to have eradicated all trace of pagan practices. These practices persist as ways of ensuring safety and escape from the dark forces, even when their precise origins are forgotten.

Hecate is associated with uncanny things in the spirit world, and is worshipped and placated out on the highways at the point where three roads meet, places which seem to be haunted in many cultures in Europe and elsewhere. She is portrayed as a goddess of the night with three faces, carrying torches and accompanied by baying hounds. She is related to Persephone and is sometimes represented as leading her out of Hades, and like Persephone is a ruler over the souls of the dead in the underworld. She sends ghosts and demons out into the world, often accompanying them, her approach signalled by the howling of her hounds. Her notorious rites were called, 'Hecate's Suppers'. They were rites of purification, a cleansing and making safe of the road for travellers. Offerings of food for Hecate were, in Classical times, laid out at a particular junction of three roads at the end of each month. Often these would contain dog's flesh. She is herself a formidable goddess who 'meets' and frightens wayfarers and travellers and must be placated if the object of the journey is to be

successful, and the destination safely reached.³⁰¹ A respectable cult of Hecate seems to have survived Roman dominance and continued in the Peninsula.

Like the earliest Sibylline divinity, Hecate is a chthonian goddess.³⁰² If invoked by a man she could aid him in cattle breeding. For women she had functions similar to Diana, Selene and Artemis, being a nurturer and protectress of mothers and children or of child birth or child care. Here in Valgrana, the Christian Chapel is placed on the road to the cattle market and the altar is dedicated to the Holy Mother and Child.

When we take into account both the location of the Chapel and the particular saints and doctors of the Church depicted on its walls, the rhetoric of its iconography is understood. It suggests an affirmation of the efficacy of Christianity in precisely those areas of life and experience where Hecate, or the Northern Italian Sibyl of Norcia might formerly have been invoked, even in a muted form of folk-religion or heretical superstition.

The Chapel is dedicated to SS. Mauro and Bernard. It is necessary to see their relationship to highways and journeys to understand how Christian Saints were substituted here for pagan error.

St Mauro, Maurice, Maur or Moritz

San Mauro was the constant companion of Saint Benedict, he in whom the *Sibilla Hekate* met her match and who was effectively the founder of Monastic life as it is

³⁰¹ Alcamenes is reputed to be the first to show her with three bodies (see Pausanias, 2. 30. a.). The famous Roman statue shows her with three bodies.

³⁰² According to Apollodorus (*Ap. Ath.* 325 a.) a particular kind of fish was sacrificed to her and fish were the offering appropriate to the old Earth Gods, the gods of the Underworld. She is often confused with Artemis and her functions overlap. She is not mentioned by Homer but is prominent in Hesiod's *Theogony*. In the Myth, Zeus honours her by taking away none of her rights when the rest of the Titans are banished. She was said to be powerful in earth, sea, and the heavens.



Valgrana: Chapel: Saints Ambrose and Augustine: possibly the first appearance of spectacles in pictorial art



Valgrano: Chapel: Saints Gregory and Jerome

understood in the West.³⁰³ Mauro was given to Saint Benedict as a child, to be brought up by him. He became one of the earliest Benedictine monks and was with St Benedict throughout his life. French culture makes much of *St Maur*.³⁰⁴ In the fifteenth century, Valgrano was ruled by the French aristocracy who would believe that St Mauro would have been in attendance at the encounter with the *Sibilla Hecate*, but would claim him as, in effect, a French saint, and as patrons dedicate the Chapel accordingly. His significance at this site may be that he is a companion at the defeat of *Sibilla Hecate* in the Northern part of the Italian peninsula.

St Bernard (c.996-c.1081)

St Bernard of Montjoux, as a canon of the Cathedral of Aosta, had the role of making sure the roads were safe in the region to which Valgrano belongs, protecting travellers and overseeing the mountain passes. He founded hospices for travellers at the top of the passes and staffed them with Augustinian Canons Regular, placing them at the heads of the two roads now bearing his name, the Great and Little St Bernard passes.³⁰⁵

Pictorial Representation of the Female Saints

This Chapel is noticeably adorned with a high proportion of female Saints together with Our Lady. It seems to be an attempt to create a Christian version of a feminine shrine. In the roof there are however, the four Doctors of the Church, [See picture opposite.] Saints Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory and Jerome and the four Evangelists, necessarily the core of

³⁰³ The chief source of information on the life of San Mauro is St Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*.

³⁰⁴ In about 860, roughly two centuries after he died, a life of St Maur was written at the abbey of Glanfeuil, near Tours and Nantes. It claimed that Maur had been sent to France by St Benedict, had founded the abbey of Glanfeuil and had been buried there. A monk called Maurus may have founded the abbey, but it is very unlikely to have been Benedict's surrogate son.

³⁰⁵ The famous dogs had no association with St Bernard in his lifetime, being brought into use much later but they are they a pleasing mythic counter to Hecate and her hounds of Hell.



Valgrana: Chapel: fresco to the right of the entrance much destroyed by weather:
St. Catherine with an Angel above her

Right Doctrine.³⁰⁶ There are also two male saints on the entrance arch with one on the front façade. The portico was added long after the chapel was built. Passing under it, you can see the front façade. In the centre over the arch is an annunciation flanked on the left by a male saint too much obliterated by the weather to be identified. He seems to be reading a book.

St Catherine

On the right is St Catherine depicted in aristocratic French clothes of the late fifteenth century, kneeling in an attitude of prayer. [See picture opposite.] St Catherine of Alexandria, virgin martyr, is the patron of education and learning. She is the nearest approximation to a female Doctor of the Church. Her story is thought to originate in the story of Hypatia, a pagan philosopher of Alexandria, renowned for learning and wisdom, who died in 415, just over half a century before St Bernard's lifetime (c. 480-547). Ironically, she died at the hands of a group of fanatical monks.³⁰⁷ Catherine was second only to Mary Magdalen among female saints in Mediaeval hagiography. *The Golden Legend* relates that she was of royal birth and showed enormous erudition from an early age. When she became queen, she was converted to Christianity by a desert hermit, and had a vision of a mystic marriage with Christ. This meant that in her own view she could certainly not submit to a proposed marriage to the Roman Emperor Maxentius, who tried to undermine her faith in Christianity by argument. Failing himself to do this, he sent in a cohort of fifty pagan philosophers who, on the contrary, were speedily converted to Christianity themselves by the power of

³⁰⁶ The picture of St Ambrose is very interesting. As far as I am aware, this is the first time in the history of art that a figure is shown wearing spectacles. The new science of optics was developing rapidly, and the advent of glasses meant that an artist's or scholar's useful life could be extended by decades. Spectacles must have been a great curiosity at the time and this may mean that a learned figure in the locality, known to the artist was known to wear them. This pair seem to have quite thick pale yellow rims, possibly made of horn and round lenses: perhaps the first pair of horn-rimmed glasses to be painted.

³⁰⁷ See James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (London: Murray, 1974), p. 58.



Valgrana: Chapel: Saint at entrance possibly St Mauro



Valgrana: Chapel Saint Sebastian at right of entrance

Catherine's arguments. The hapless creatures were then burned alive before baptism by order of Maxentius. For her, the aspiring bridegroom designed an instrument of torture consisting of four revolving wheels set with iron spikes to which she was bound, but a thunderbolt destroyed it before it could harm her, so she was beheaded. Her body was carried away by Angels to Mount Sinai, the source of Christian written law and wisdom. She is a woman who represents the triumph of Christian learning and right doctrine over paganism.

The Saints Depicted Under the three open Arches

The Saints depicted on the two flat surfaces of the underside of the entrance arch are both male. [See pictures opposite]. On the left is an elderly Saint with a book and a supportive stick, facing outward towards the arriving or departing traveller. The name has been erased, probably by weathering. However, since the Chapel is dedicated to Sts Mauro and Bernard, and St Bernard appears on the back wall next to Our Lady enthroned, and this is the only male Saint whose name is lost, this may be an image of St Mauro, placed at the entrance. The book however, suggests he is a theologian.

St Sebastian

On the right is a representation of St Sebastian. St Sebastian was born in France (Gaul) and was a soldier in the Imperial Guard during the Great Persecution of Diocletian. When it was discovered that he was a practicing Christian, he was shot all through with arrows on the Palatine hill but was nursed to health by Irene, the widow of another martyr, St Castulus, whereupon Diocletian ordered that he be battered to death, which was duly done. He represents courageous opposition to pagans.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁸ Perhaps because of the symbolism of the arrows, after the fourteenth century the cult of St Sebastian became widespread as a refuge and protection against the plague. Apollo, god of the Sun and of Music, was also known as the Sender of the Plague and is depicted in classical art with arrows, potentially raining down pestilence on the population but he could also be implored to end a plague, as



Valgrana: Chapel: Saint Barbara

Under the arch to the right as we face the altar, we find two female Saints: **Saint Barbara and Saint Cristina.**

Saint Barbara

She carries the martyr's palm and a tower. [See picture opposite] Barbara, it has to be said, is also apocryphal. *The Golden Legend* relates that she was the daughter of a pagan nobleman named Dioscurus. She was a maiden of great beauty and he put her in a tower to preserve her from the attentions of her many suitors and to keep her away from Christians. The tower had only two windows and she induced workmen to construct a third and also inveigled in a Christian priest, in the guise of a doctor, who baptised her. When her father appeared, she explained that the three windows symbolised the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, who put light into her soul. Her father remained unconverted and she fled to a cleft in the rocks but was betrayed by a shepherd. Her father found her and turned her over to the authorities who tortured her and then ordered her father to kill her. He beheaded her and was struck down in the act by a bolt of lightening reducing him instantly to a pile of ash. Thus by imaginative mediaeval extension, Saint Barbara became the protectress of travellers on the road from being struck by lightening in the storms that prevail in this mountainous region.

in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Here again we see the assertion of a Christian substitute for a classical original.



Valgrana: St Christina

St Cristina

Saint Cristina [See picture opposite] is another early Christian Saint whose story is wholly legendary; indeed it may be simply a localised version of the story of Christine of Tyre. Both are narratives of appalling torture bravely suffered. Cristina was martyred like Saint Barbara, for asserting the Truth of Christianity against paganism. She took the gold and silver idols belonging to her father, broke them and distributed the gold to the poor. Her father had her scourged and threw her into prison where angels comforted her. He then threw her into Lake Bolsena with a millstone round her neck, where miraculously she floated to the surface. After more outrage and torture she was finally tied to a pillar like St Sebastian and shot to death with arrows.³⁰⁹

On the underside of the left hand arch we see St Brigida and a saint, next to the altar, whose name has been obscured by weathering in this exposed position. [See picture overleaf]

³⁰⁹ She is not to be confused with Christina the Astonishing, the Belgian thaumaturge, seen by the Church as a counter to recrudescing paganism.



Chapel: Female Saint on the arch to the left of the altar (name obliterated)



Valgrana: St Brigida

Saint Brigida

This is more likely to be St Brigida of Sweden (c. 1304-1373, canonised in 1391) not the Irish Bridget, since she was a more 'local' saint. However, St Bridget or Bride of Ireland also has an interesting connexion with the themes of the chapel. The Irish Bridget is often confused with the earlier pagan Bride, the triple-fire goddess, identifiable as Hecate.

Brigida of Sweden, had a strong Italian cultus in the fifteenth century. [See picture opposite] She was a devout noblewoman attached to the Swedish court, where indefatigably she tried to induce a more sober frame of mind in Queen Blanche and her husband King Magnus II. When she was widowed, she founded the Order of the Holy Saviour, or 'Bridgettines', an order of nuns. She moved to Rome, living a very austere life and caring for the poor. Whilst in Rome, she proffered extremely outspoken unsought advice on politics and the Church to the Popes of the day. Her book, *Revelations*, in which she gave an account of her visions, was very controversial, some clerics asserting that she was deceived and unorthodox and arguing hotly at the Councils of Constance (1414) and Basle (1431). She was however, canonised, a victory for those who maintained that her book and her trenchant comments to the Popes were the authentic voice of right doctrine. Here she is chosen as another female intellectual, defending the Church against corrupt doctrine, a counterpart of the male Doctors of the Church.

The female saints in the Chapel represent either Right Doctrine, or the superiority of Christianity over paganism. They are female intellectuals and martyred heroines. The insistence of the replacement of pagan or corrupt religion by the Christian revelation is the theme of all the pictures in this Chapel. It is therefore, perfectly credible that the motivation for its construction was to replace and repress a surviving folk custom, pagan in origin and having to do with female deities, Hecate, or the more local version, 'Sibilla Hekate' in particular, the chthonic female deity said to be encountered on lonely highways. Instead, there are intellectual female saints having particular relevance to the superiority of Christianity over pagan superstition.



Valperga: the Arch of the Sibyls

Iconography allied to oral instruction played an important part in the education of the laity. The great stained glass epics of the major cathedrals had extraordinarily sophisticated narrative patterning making theological comparisons between Old and New Testaments. The non-literate were instructed in their faith by having the pictures and their relationships explained *in extensio* whilst gazing at the pictorial images. The instruction cannot have been infantile or simplistic, given the complexity of the relationships depicted. In cultures where the written word is not generally referred to, the faculty of memory is cultivated, even as far as source references for particular tales, told with the aid of pictures.³¹⁰ Pagan practices were to be avoided, and if Sibyls were excluded from the ban on Classical religion, as St Augustine insisted, then the intelligent but illiterate must be instructed as to why that might be. I think it is likely to be for that reason that the pictures in the Chapel were painted in the Church at about the same time as a series of Sibyls, with their vaticinations prophesying the coming of Christ and the salvation of the world.

1477 VALPERGA

The Church of San Giorgio di Valperga

The Sibyls are in the second chapel on the left hand side of the nave.³¹¹ They are painted on the underside of the arch. There are six. [See the picture opposite.] They are

³¹⁰ We must not forget that whilst not all the laity were literate, they were not stupid or completely uneducated in theology and the history of their religion. Saint Catherine of Siena, whilst entering into doctrinal and political debate with the Pope, eventually successfully convincing him that it was essential that he return with his Curia, from Avignon to Rome, remained unable to write till her life's end. Her letters were all perforce, dictated. Chaucer's Wife of Bath, representative of a rising middle class, presents very sophisticated theological arguments against celibacy. She cites Cicero, Virgil, St Julian, and the Doctors of the Church. She is active in her parish and we should not assume that such women went untaught. Oral instruction aided by pictures in churches and chapels along with better memory in those unable to read, can account for a high standard of theological awareness.

³¹¹ See Piccat, pp. 26-31.

flanked by twelve prophets in tondi. The date, according to the notice on the squared capital of the pillar from which the arch springs is 3 October, 1477.

The style harks back to mediaeval miniature manuscript painting, the decoration of the edges of significant pages of an important codex. On this scale it has a harmony and rhythm that is entirely pleasing. It provides a visual contrast to the linear geometric severity of line of the intersecting arcs of the vaulting to which it is applied. The figures are head and shoulder images. They are contained in tondi formed by the rhythmic coils of the foliage which curls round the six figures, both providing a border defining the space the individual Sibyls occupy and unifying the six disparate pictures. The faces of the Sibyls are uniformly bland, attractive, conventionalised young women with little to distinguish them. They do not strike one as portraits and entirely lack the strong individuality of the pictures at Valgrana. The costumes are Italian, provincial and conservative, having no reference to the extravagance or eccentricities of contemporary French high fashion. The description and colours of their costumes do not accord with the Revello manuscript or the descriptions in the Ferrara or Paduan manuscripts, the artist has felt free to make his own visual designs even though the text is strictly governed by the written tradition.³¹² There is no use of perspective or many of the technical advances of the Renaissance. With the exception of the two Sibyls immediately above the capitals, their scrolls hang down from each tondo. They do not curl or flow with the sinuous foliage and their rigidity and the severe black and white of scroll and script break the rhythm of the fresco, emphasising the importance of the text.

TEXT

The names of two of the Sibyls are clearly visible. The others can be identified from remaining fragments of the letters and by the identifying the substance of their vaticinations and comparing these with the known source material and the local Revello Passion.

³¹² The Olomouc manuscript gives no physical descriptions, only literary origins.



Valperga: Sibilla Europa

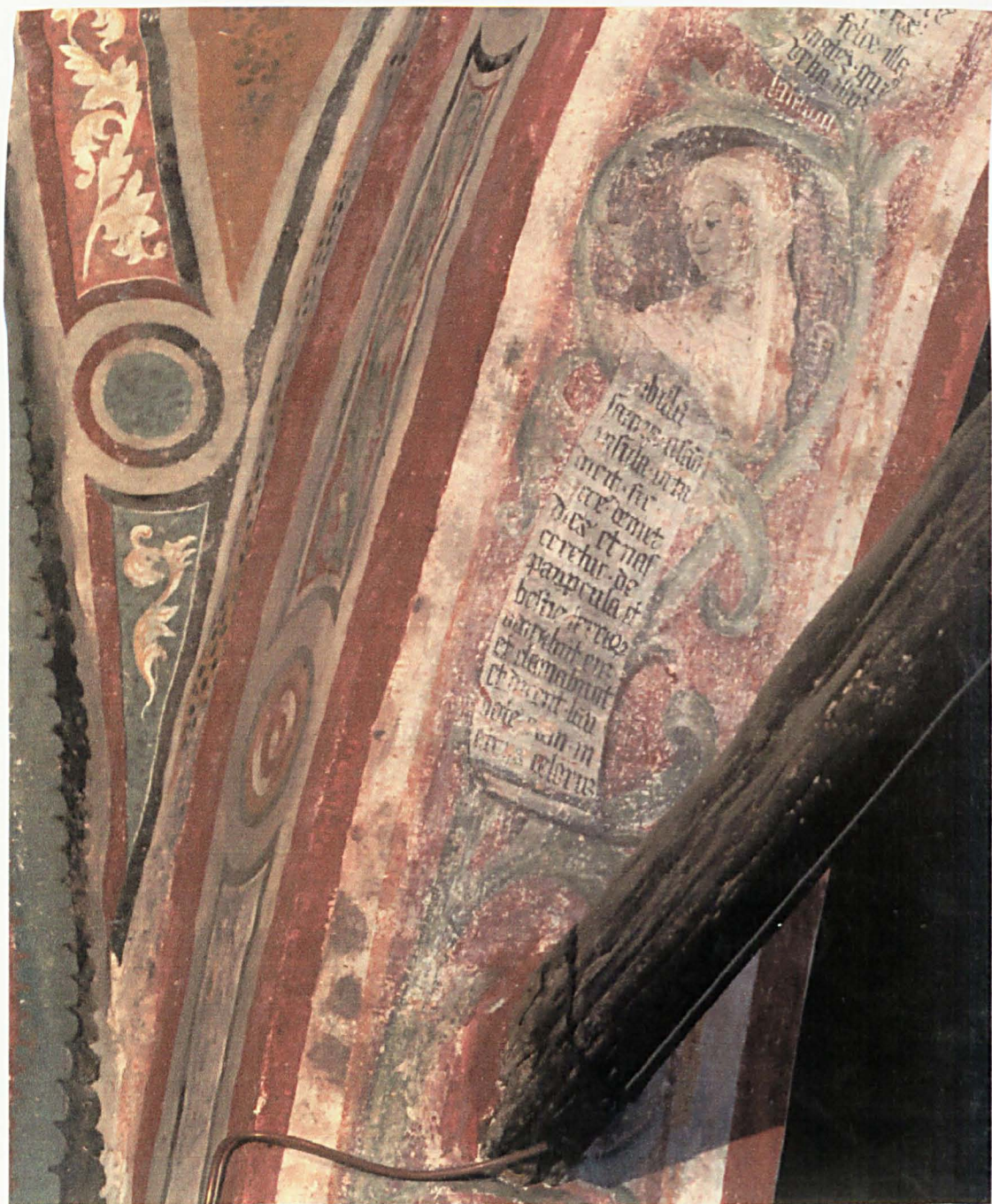
SIBILLA EUROPA

[See the picture opposite.] This Sibyl is at the base of the left-hand section of the arch. Her vaticination is not on a scroll but written in a rectangular space, left for the purpose, immediately below her and above the capital. It has some minor variations in spelling from the Revello MS. and omits the word *silvarum* after *olimpi*, but in all other respects is the same: ³¹³

**Veniet ille et transibit colles et
montes et latices olimpi regnabit
in paupertate et dominabitur in
silentio et egredietur de utero
virginis.**

The date of the fresco is written immediately beneath this on the capital.

³¹³ See Appendix 5 for contents of the Revello manuscript, including translations which reflect the sense of the Latin oracles at this site.



Valperga: Sibilla Samia

SIBILLA SAMIA

This is the next Sibyl above the Europa. [See picture opposite.] Her name is in black letter at the beginning of the text on her pendant scroll, *Sibilla Samia, a Samo insula orta, dicit sic:*³¹⁴

Ecce veniet / dies et nas/ceretur de/ paupercula

et / bestie terrarum / adorabunt eum / et clamabunt /

et decent: lau/date eum in / atriis celorum.³¹⁵

Marco Piccat, writing of these Sibyls compares their dress and facial appearance with the descriptions given in the Revello Passion Play.³¹⁶ Here the description tallies in some particulars. However, I take this to be coincidental since the artist here seems to have felt free to draw all the Sibyls as conventional, pretty young girls. I cannot agree with Piccat that some are seen as older than others. The variations in text as between this and the Passion Play are that here we see *dies* for *dives* and *nasceretur* for *nascetur*. These variants may well be copyist's errors. In all other respects this is the canonical oracle for the Samian Sibyl. (See Appendix 2 for translation.)

³¹⁴ 'Sibilla Samia, born on the island of Samos.'

³¹⁵ Shortening signs in the text are here removed and the full version of the word given with the added letters emboldened.

³¹⁶ Marco Piccat, p. 26-31



Valperga: Sibilla Tiburtina

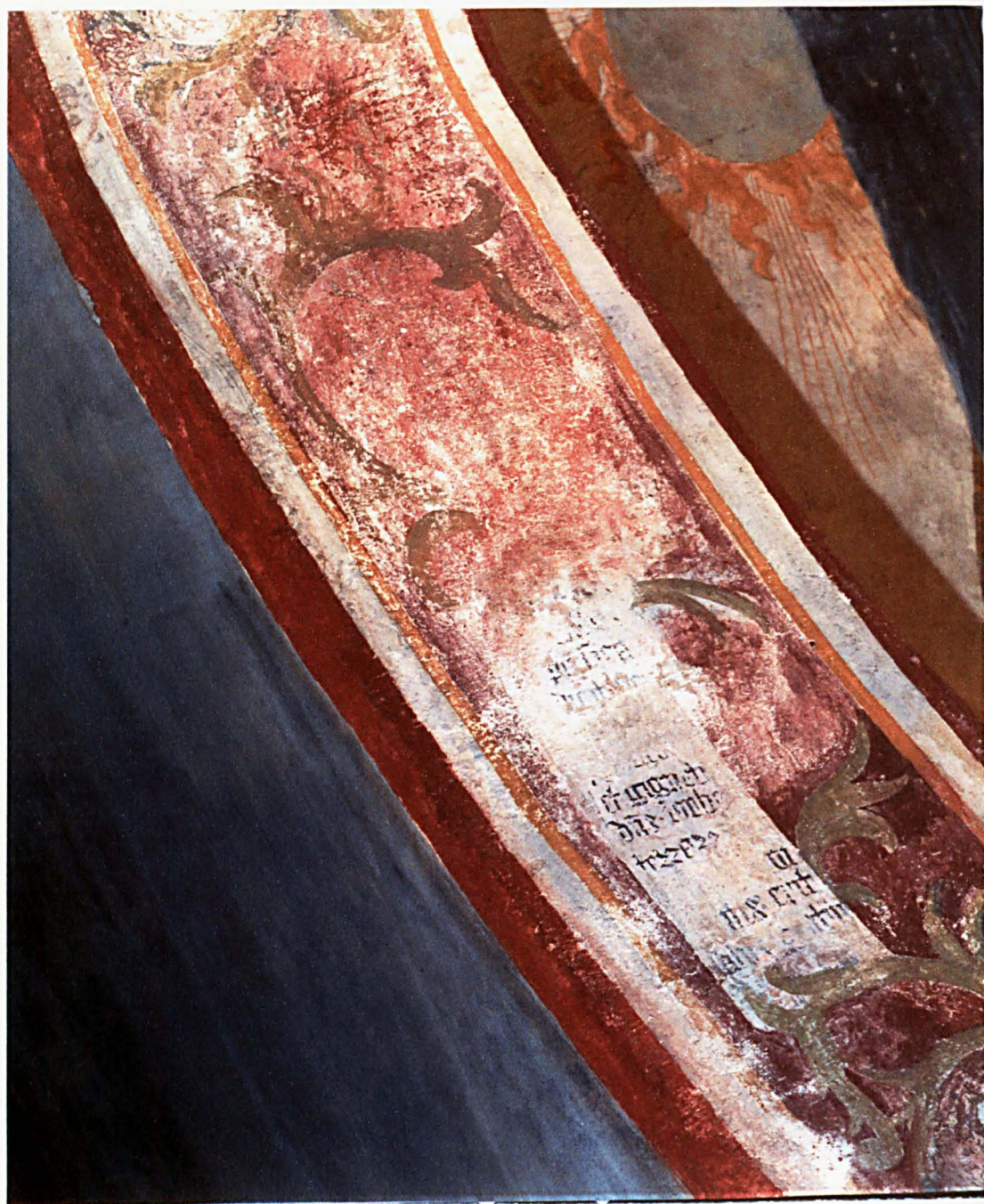
SIBILLA TIBURTINA

The next Sibyl above the Samia, at the apex of the arch is the Sibilla Tiburtina. [See the picture opposite.] The inscription starts with her name and identification: *Sibilla Tyburtina, decora nata dicit sic:*³¹⁷

Nascetur / **Christus** in (Beth)e/lem **anunciabitur** / in Nazareth / regnante ta/uro
pacifico / fundatore / quietis/ (O) / felix illa / mater **quius** / urba illum /
Latabu(nt).

This quotation is substantially the same as the Edinburgh manuscript and is the same as the first three lines of the Tiburtina's speech in the Revello manuscript with the exception of the words *quius urba* and *latabunt*, which I understand to be copyists errors for *cuius ubera* and *lactabunt* respectively. (See Appendix 2 for translation.)

³¹⁷ 'Sibilla Tiburtina, she who was born beautiful, speaks thus.'



Valperga: Sibilla Persica

SIBILLA PERSICA

The Sibyl opposite the Tiburtina at the apex of the right hand sector of the arch is almost totally obscured, the condition of the fresco being very much deteriorated. [See **picture opposite.**] She is the Sibilla Persica. The following script can still be discerned:

Sibilla / persica / dicit sic [gap where text is lost, presumably the words, *Ecce bestia / conculaberis*]

Et gignet(ur) / dominus in orb(em) / terrarum / [another gap where text is lost, presumably *Et gremium virginis erit salus gentium*, which is the text of the Revello play.] Here, what is left is:

m / ----nis erit / salus g—tium.

There seems no room on the scroll for the rest of the Revello speech: *et pedes eius in valitudine hominum. Invisibile verbum palpabitur*. The last sentence in the Revello MS., ‘*Invisibile verbum palpabitur*’ is missing from the original Orsini cycle according to all the surviving manuscripts. (See Appendix 2 for translation.)

The Sibyl below the Persica is no longer identifiable. A ghostly white image of her remains, with her white scroll which is, alas, empty of words. [See **picture overleaf**]



Valperga: Unidentifiable 5th Sibyl



Valperga: Sibilla Hellespontica

SIBILLA HELESPONTICA

The Sibyl at the base of this sector [See the picture opposite.] of the arch is the Sibilla Helespontica. The phrases identifying and describing her are now so deteriorated that it is not possible to reconstruct them but the prophecy, with the help of source documents may be construed thus:

**De excelso celorum habitaculo pro/spexit deus humiles suos et nascetur in /
d(ie)bus (novissi)mis de virgin(e hebre(a) / in cunabu)los terre.**

The only variation from the Revello MS. is *cunabulos* as opposed to *cunabulis* which is surely a scribal error. (See Appendix 2 for translation.)

It is not certain whether there were six other Sibyls on another arch, making up the whole number of twelve.

Valperga constitutes a substantially mediaeval view of the Sibyls as Christian prophetesses. There is no evidence whatever of any knowledge of Classical dress, sources, literary and other, or the wider frame of Classical learning and reading, in this remote, mountainous, French dominated valley; that is, no sign of the learning so evident less than a decade later at Siena.

**PART III (CONTINUED): THE SIBYL CYCLES
OF CENTRAL AND NORTHERN ITALY**

**SECTION II: THE SIBYL CYCLES AFTER THE
ADVENT OF THE PRINTED IMAGE**

CHAPTER IV:

MOUNTAIN SIBYLS AFTER THE ADVENT OF THE PRINTED IMAGE



Bagolino: Sibilla

CHAPTER IV: MOUNTAIN SIBYLS AFTER THE ADVENT OF THE PRINTED IMAGE

All the frescos in this chapter date from the period after the publication of the engravings of Baldini and the woodcuts of Barbieri which had such a wide circulation and therefore affected the conventions in rendering Sibyls in less ephemeral art forms. Not all these sites display the influence of these printed images. However, it is perhaps helpful to make a distinction, so that the prints may be called to mind by the reader when making a personal estimation of the frescos whose images are presented here.

1486: BAGOLINO

Chiesa di San Rocco.

The Church at Bagolino is at present permanently closed, and as yet I have not been able to gain access. What I am able to say here, at present, is reliant on G. De Floriani and A. Alegri.³¹⁸

The Sibyls are painted on the under-surface of arches, in the manner of the mountain Sibyls of Piedmont and Lombardy. The Artist is 'Giovan Pietro da Cemmo' whose signature is at the base of the left arch, together with the following text:

Qui hoc opus pinxit Cemigena fuit. (Cemmo made this painted work here.)

Above the Sibilla Delfica is the date 1486. Until access is possible, I am unable to say whether the pictures have inscriptions below them, in the manner of the area, how many there are and which Sibyls are present. [See picture opposite]

³¹⁸ G. De Floriani and A. Alegri, *La Pittura in Liguria. Il Quattrocento* (Genova: [n. pub.], 1991), p. 353 and n. 109.



Bienna: left hand section of the chancel arch

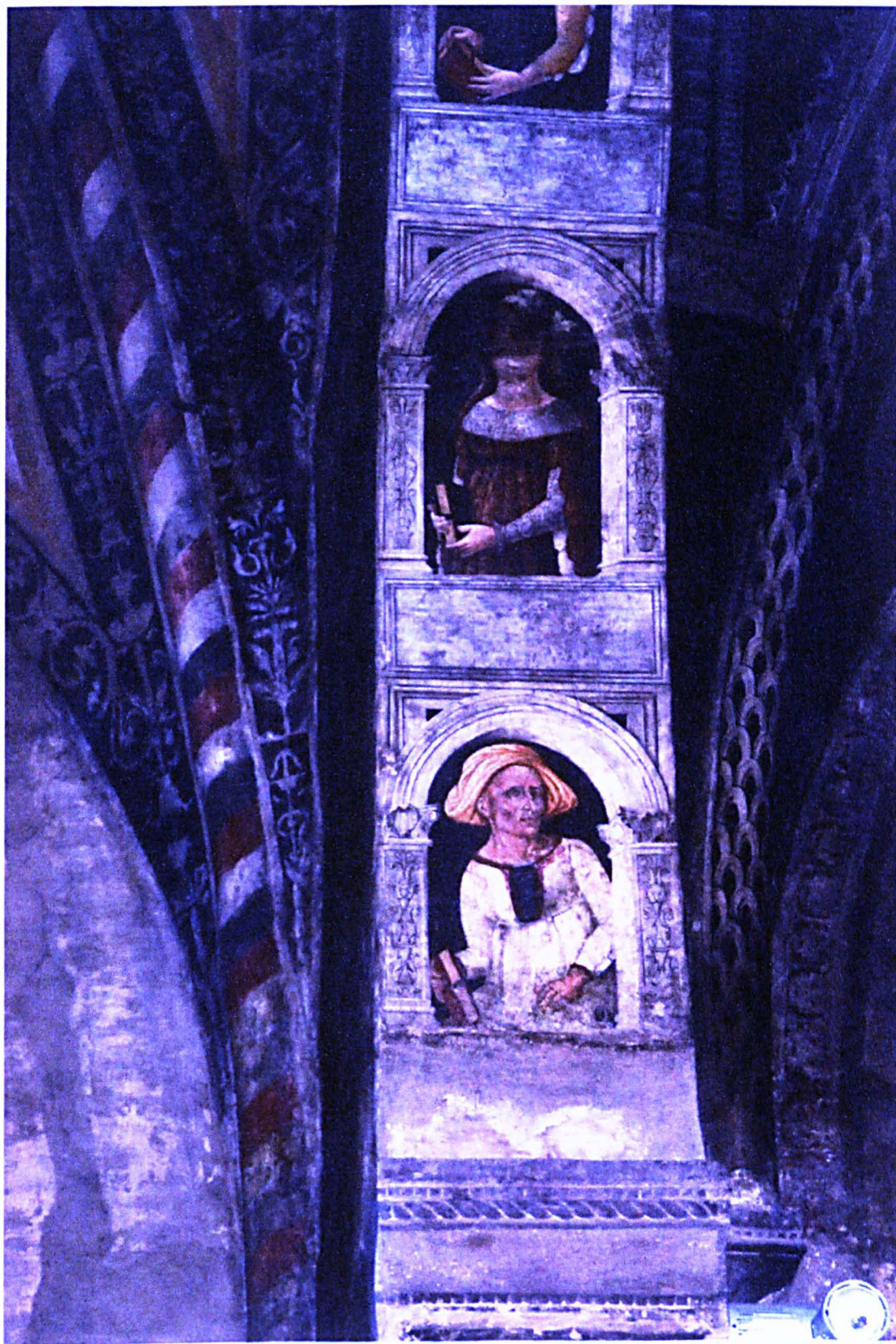
c. 1493 BIENNO

Chiesa di Santa Maria. Artist said to be Giovan Pietro da Cemmo

It is at Bienno that the convention established in the Barbieri woodcuts that Sibyls are portrayed each under her own painted arch first appears. [See pictures opposite and overleaf] This is the first instance of this motif appearing in the painted cycles. It is impossible to attribute it with certainty to the circulation of these prints. Nevertheless it is significant that its appearance in permanent painted works of art comes after the wide dissemination of the Barbieri woodcuts. We shall see that this motif recurs in later cycles.

If these are indeed by Giovan Pietro da Cemmo, one can see a tremendous change from his broad, stylised mode at Bagolino, where the Sibyl we see illustrated is charming but lacks vivacity and individuality. At Bienno there is an element of portraiture and the figures, though constrained by the formal arches framing them have a sense of movement and individuality. The presence of these round-headed arches is interesting, since they are reminiscent of the arches framing the Barbieri woodcuts, published in 1481 and enjoying a wide circulation. The Sibyls here share little else in common with those images, however. There is no attempt at classical dress nor any sense that an attempt has been made to incorporate Classical knowledge in the portraits.

The frescos are painted on the underside of the arch separating the Sanctuary from the body of the church. This fresco is a series of rectangular pictures with young, jolly girls, clad as for a *festa* or a pageant, in fashionable aristocratic Renaissance clothes in very fine materials. The artist clearly enjoyed painting lovely women. They have highly individual appearance and evince vivid individual personality as they lean forth from the painted arches which frame them. They often transgress the boundaries of the frame, when a hand or a head appears to lean out or touch it. There is no attempt to render the personalities of the Ancient Sibyls, or to show that they have different ages, and physical attributes or nationalities. The impression is that these pictures are of individuals connected with the parish. Perhaps after



Bienna: left hand arch Sibyls 1 and 2



Bienna: the left hand section of the chancel arch: Sibyls 3, 4 and 5

participation in a religious play featuring Sibyls, their festal dresses and appearance were recorded in the church as a memorial of the pious, beautiful (and expensive) ceremony.

The Sibyls have no scrolls or text. They are holding books.³¹⁹ There are grey oblong spaces for their speeches or oracles under each portrait. However, although traces of original writing can be dimly descried, no single word or letter can be made out. Different paint must have been applied to the grey labels for the text. Possibly this was done *a secco*, after the painting was completed, since none of the lovely colours and detail of the pictures seems to have deteriorated markedly. [See pictures opposite and overleaf.]

³¹⁹ See F Mazzini, *Affreschi Lombardi del Quattrocento* (Milano: Silvana Editoriale d'Arte, 1965), pp. 465-68 and p. 595.



Bienna: the apex of the chancel arch: Sibyls 4, 5 and 6



Bienna: the right hand section of the chancel arch



Bienna: the right hand arch Sibyls 6, 7 and 8



Bienno: the base of the right hand section of the chancel arch: Sibyls 9 and 10



Saluzzo: Church: one of the twin side chapels placed at either side of the sanctuary.
Both contain Sibyl corbels from which spring the ribs of the interior vaulting.

MID-1490s: SALUZZO

Chiesa di san Giovanni, the Marquis's Chapel, later to become the mortuary chapel of Ludovico I.

Four sculpted Sibyls. Artist: Antonio Moiturier, French

The presence of the French artist, Antonio Moiturier, a native of Lyons, indicates the strong cultural influence of France on this part of North Western Italy, so often French ruled. Moiturier probably met Ludovico I, the then ruler of the Saluzzo region, in France. In 1492 there was a performance of the Passion Play at Revello, introduced by the oracles of the twelve Sibyls. This was probably to celebrate the marriage or betrothal of Ludovico II. The memory of that may well have been the inspiration for the Sibyls in the large, floor-standing, niches to right and left of the Choir. In one of the niches, to the left when facing the altar, the tomb of Ludovico I is placed. [See picture opposite]

These are Sibyls in the company of prophets, under arches in the Piedmontese tradition but sculpted not painted. These Sibyls have banners but there are no words on them so the Sibyls are unidentifiable. There are eight figures altogether, four prophets and four Sibyls. They are carved corbels supporting the rise of the liernes of the vaults of these niches.³²⁰ [See picture overleaf]

One of the Sibyls bears a very strong resemblance to the Baldini engraving of the Sibilla Hellespontica. [See pictures on the following pages.] It is so strong a resemblance as to preclude coincidence. The Baldini engravings were published in 1478 in Florence and it is interesting to see their distribution as far as lands approaching the French border. Three of the Sibyls in the fresco in the neighbouring Casa Cavassa in Saluzzo are closely based on the

³²⁰ According to Cornegliotti, p. xxi, f.n. 62, there are only two and these are without scrolls and not identifiable as individuals. She clearly is working from a secondary source and cannot have seen these. There are four of these sculpted Sibyls, two in each side-chapel.



Saluzzo: Church: Sibyl corbel having strong similarity to the Baldini Elispontica



Baldini: Sibilla Elispontica 1478



Saluzzo: Church: Sibyl apparently drawn from Baldini's Hellespontica



Saluzzo: Church: Sibyl corbel: she looks towards the left with an arm extended behind holding a scroll



Saluzzo: Church: Sibyl corbel



Saluzzo: Church: Prophet holding a book



Saluzzo: Church: Prophet corbel



Bizzozzero: front view of the ciborium: Sibyls and prophets on the undersides of the arches



Bizzozzero: side view of the ciborium

Baldini source, so it is very likely that a copy of this set was present in Saluzzo and used as a source for both works of Art.

1498 BIZZOZZERO

At present, this church is kept closed because of repeated vandalism.³²¹ Here the artist was Galdino da Varese. There is also a second signature on the Ciborium, that of 'Giovanni'. '*Hoc opus depinsit Magister Galdinus di Varisio 1498.*' And, '*1498 die XXVIII octobris per Iohaês*'. De Clercq asserts that 'Giovanni' is, without doubt, also a member of the Campanigo family, who preferred to attach the name of their place of birth, Galdino, after their personal, given name. The presence of the family is attested in Varese after 1476. [See picture of ciborium opposite]

Some authorities, writing before the work of Guglielmette Villa in 1964, say that the date of these paintings is 1428.³²² In my view this is impossible, since this would pre-date the Orsini fresco, and mean that this modest work in a remote mountain chapel started the whole genre. This is in fact the last known remaining work of the Piedmontese / Lombardic sub-genre, with the exception of the one instance of the form painted outside the region which is almost certainly later. Whilst highly attractive, this is a conventional, conservative work with no evidence of originality. It works within a well-established tradition. Careful work on the inscription revealed that the date 1428 is a misreading of the text inscribed on the wall, and that what it actually says is 1498. The restoration of 1970 has rendered the last two figures unreadable, but there is good photographic evidence of the state of the text before that. The mistake has arisen because the '9' is painted with a short tail. The date 1498 places the fresco in a relationship with other known works.

³²¹ Although I have visited the site, I have been unable to gain permission for entry. I am dependent here on the distinguished article by Carlo De Clercq, 'Contribution à l'iconographie des Sibylles II', *Jaarboek, Koninklyk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp*, (1980), pp. 12-14.

³²² See De Clercq, 'Contribution à l'iconographie des Sibylles' for full bibliography.

The mistake is to an extent understandable because the work of this considerable artist harks back to the fourteenth-century late Gothic style. It is linear, graceful and unconcerned with perspective. The clothes that the Sibyls wear, whilst painted in the fourteenth-century manner, are however, late fifteen-century aristocratic fashions, of a rather French appearance.

The Sibyls, alternating with prophets, are on the underside of three gothic arches: the front arch and two lateral arches, defining three the sides of the Chapel of the Virgin, a ciborium which projects from the wall near the entrance to the church.³²³ Each of the three arches has six rectangular panels with alternate prophets and Sibyls. They are half figures, each with a name and an oracle, though some of the oracles have deteriorated beyond legibility.

On the front arch, reading from left to right standing outside the ciborium and facing the altar, are found: Daniel, Sibylla **Cumana**, Moses, Sibylla **Samia**, Zachariah and lastly, the **Cumea**, or **Cimmerian** Sibyl. [See pictures on the following pages]

On the left-hand arch, again reading from left to right standing outside, are found: A prophet with no remaining text, an **unidentified Sibyl**, David, the Sibylla **Lybica**, Solomon followed by the **Erythraean** Sibyl. [See pictures on the following pages]

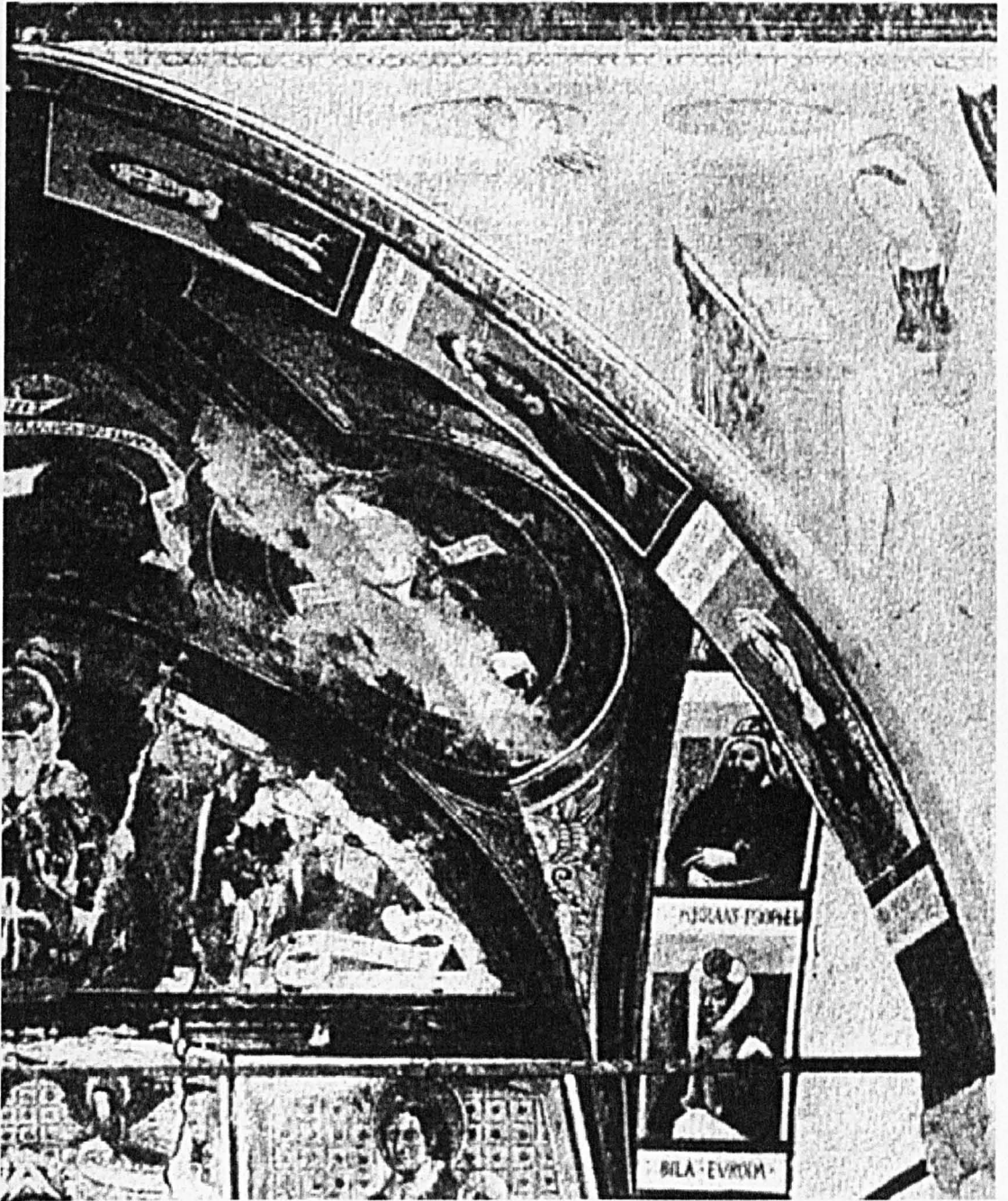
On the right-hand arch, one sees no text apart from the names of the persons, painted in very large letters. De Clercq thinks it looks very much as if the text has disappeared at some point and there has been a considerable amount of retouching. His identification of the figures at present is as follows, reading from left to right standing outside the ciborium: Jeremiah, Sibylla **Tiburtina**, Isaiah, Sibylla **Agrippa**, Abraham, Sibylla **Europa**.

De Clercq declares that the source of the iconographic scheme from which Galdino worked cannot be known. Because this study undertakes a description of all the Sibyl sites in

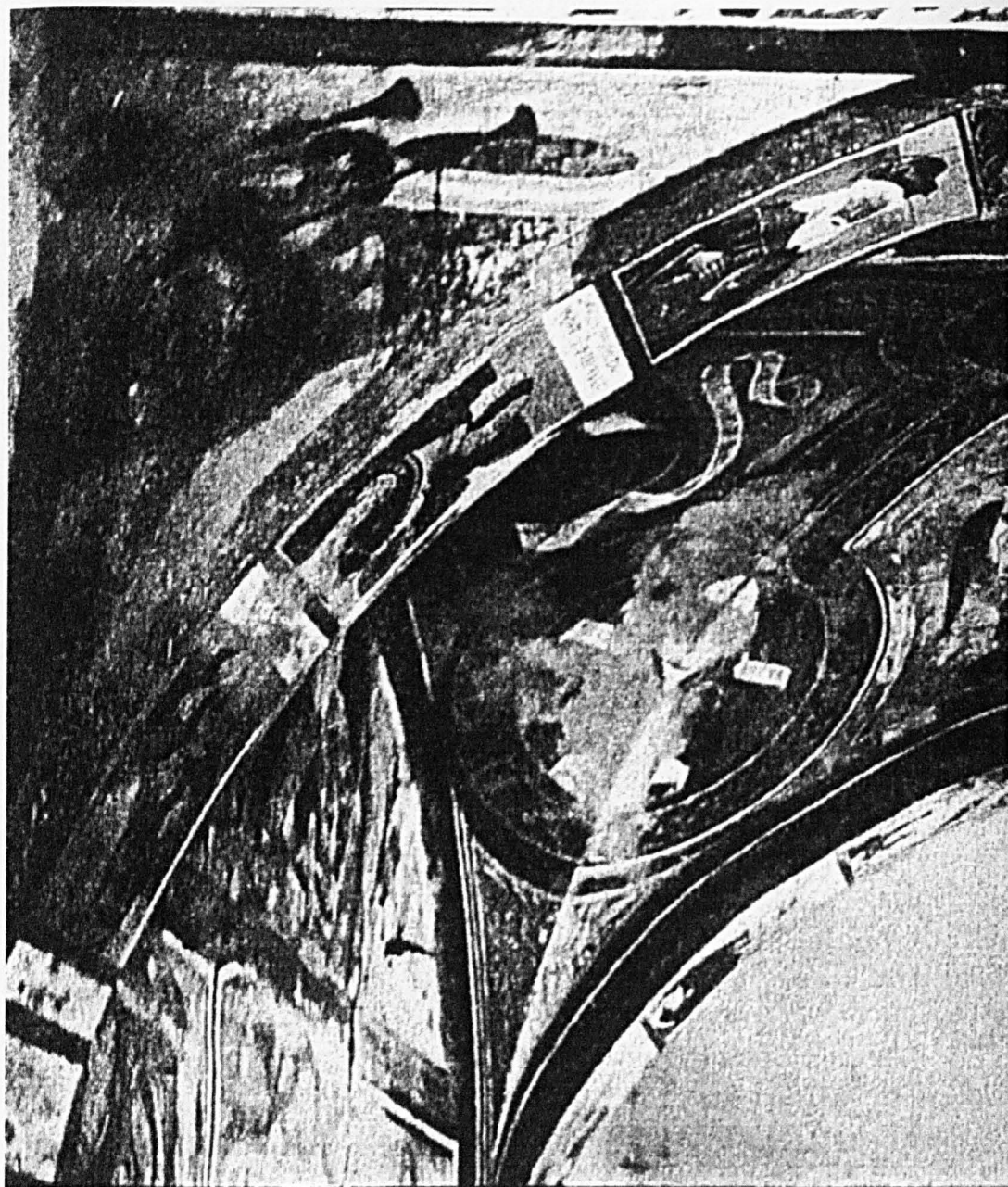
³²³See Mazzini, *Affreschi Lombardi del Quattrocento* (Milano: Silvana Editoriale d'Arte, 1965), pp. 642-5.



Bizzozzero: the left hand side of the front arch: Daniel, Sibilla Cumana, Moses. On the left hand arch, an unidentified Sibyl and Prophet may be seen



Bizzozzero: the right hand side of the front arch. Samia; Zachariah and lastly, the Cumea, or Cimmerian Sibyl. The Europa can be seen on the right hand arch below Abraham



Bizzozzero: the left sector of the left hand arch is seen at the front. Reading from left to right we see an unidentified prophet, an unidentified Sibyl then the prophet David at the apex



Bizzozzero: the right sector of left hand arch where the Sibilla Libica is seen at the top of the arch followed by Solomon with the Sibilla Ericha or Erythaea at the bottom. There is a frontal view of the end of the front arch with Zachariah and the Cumea, or Cimmerian Sibyl



Bizzozzero: Three Sibyls: Sibilla Ericha, Sibilla Libica, the Prophet David and Sibilla Cumana. Note the Ericha's fish-fin armorial sleeves similar to the Baldini Cumana

the region in chronological order, and has identified the relationship between the wayside chapel in Valgrana and the Sibyls in the church, it is now possible to suggest that this is a recognisable regional scheme, perhaps initiated at Valgrana. What we have here is an iconographic scheme for asserting tough Orthodox Doctrine, in the context of the gentle, holy, female presence of Our Lady. In the ceiling of the ciborium at Bizzozzero, just as at Valgrano, there is a fresco of the Latin doctors of the Church and the symbols of the four evangelists. However, at Bizzozzero the selected group of female saints, famous for their heroic assertion of the superiority of the Christian religion over paganism, is missing.

Costume and Appearance

These Sibyls lack the freshness and vivacity of the Giovan Pietro da Cemmo Sibyls at Bienno painted five years before. Here, Galdino da Varese has painted static anonymous types, not lively individuals. They have the linear grace, but lack depth and perspective. They are ciphers, rather like playing cards or fashion plates. They wear aristocratic high fashion, essentially Italian but with some French influence, as witness the headdress of the Sibylla Lybica. The 'Ericha' (Erythraea) has upper sleeves reminiscent of armour, similar to those of the Sibylla Cumana of the Baldini engravings. [See illustration opposite.]

TEXT

SIBYLLA CUMANA

Ultima Cumei (venit iam ?) carminis.³²⁴

The first line of the canonical text.

SIBYLLA SAMIA

Ecce veniet dies et nascetur puer.

³²⁴ See De Clercq. The pictures reproduced here are from G. De Floriani and A. Alegri, *La Pittura in Liguria. Il Quattrocento* (Genova: [n. pub.], 1991), pp. 642-3. For translation, see Appendix 2.

This is a contraction and misquotation of the canonical text. It should read, **Ecce veniet diēs**. However, since it continues, **et nascetur**, there is no real confusion with the canonical text of the Lybica, which begins, **Ecce veniet dies et illuminabit dominus condensa tenebrarum**.

SIBYLLA CUMEA OR CIMMERIAN

Ascendit Virgo (chasta?) nutriens puerum.

This is part of the canonical text for the Cimmerian Sibyl.

SIBYLLA ERICHA (ERITREA)

De excelso celorum habitaculo prospe.

This phrase is the beginning of the canonical oracle for the Erythraean Sibyl. Like the oracle below, for some reason it is chopped off in mid word and should read: *habitaculo prospexit Deus humiles suos*.

SIBYLLA LYBICA

Ecce veniet Deus et illuminabit condensa tenebrarum et sol.

Here, as in the previous oracle, the last word of the canonical text is cut short arbitrarily. Again, this is the beginning of the canonical oracle. The perfunctory manner of cutting words short at the end of the space provided, perhaps indicates a scribe or lettering painter who has himself, no Latin. He appears simply to be copying out as much text from a list of Sibylline oracles as will fit. ‘*Sol*’ instead of ‘*solvetur*’ is particularly unfortunate here because the curtailment is not obvious, since *sol* means ‘sun’ and fits the context of God illuminating darkness with light.

THERE FOLLOWS AN UN-NAMED SIBYL AND ABSENT TEXT.

SIBYLLA TIBURTINA

Text is missing.

SIBYLLA AGRIPPA

Text is missing.

SIBYLLA EUROPA

Text is missing.

The text derives its content and attributions from the Orsini canonical text. It is not possible to suggest the identity of the anonymous Sibyl, since the text has been obliterated and there are only eight named Sibyls here, chosen from a canon of twelve.



Tivoli: The Roman site: the Grove of the Sibilla Tiburtina with the Temple above the caves

THE LOMBARD FORM IN LATIUM: TIVOLI AND CORI

c. 1505 TIVOLI

San Giovanni Evangelista: The Hospital Chapel: early years of the sixteenth century

Tivoli is one of the two sites displaying all the features of the Lombaric / Piedmontese form of Sibyl cycle, outside that region.³²⁵

These frescos are late in the tradition of Sibyl Cycles. This is strange, since they are painted in the town standing over the chasm where, according to legend, the image of one of the two Italian Sibyls, the Sibilla Albunea, or Tiburtina, emerged, dry from the water, with a book in her hand. No doubt this prompted a late patron to commission a cycle of Sibyls, Christianising the myth. Again we see an association with prophets and doctors of the church. These are painted in the roof of the chancel, immediately behind the arch of the Sibyls. Perhaps this collocation was once well understood to be an assertion of Orthodoxy against paganism. Here at Tivoli, it is to be expected that the folk myth regarding pagan Sibyls and Sibyl surrogates such as Hecate, would be particularly strong. Indeed the round temple, the Sibyl shrine, survives to this day above the cavern and stands at the head of the gorge. [See picture opposite.]

This is an odd fresco to find in Latium. It is wholly within the tradition of the Lombardy / Piedmont mode of the genre. It is almost certain that whoever painted this cycle was influenced by those frescos, and perhaps came from that area. Alternatively the patron who commissioned this fresco came from the north-west. Both could be true. The cycle is

³²⁵ Settis makes fleeting reference to this cycle. Settis, 'Sibilla Agrippa' *Etudes de lettres. Revue de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Lausanne*, 4 (1985), p. 118. He appends a picture, of the Agrippa, to illustrate his remark that the conventional Sibyl in art is young and beautiful. That is the only serious scholarly reference I have so far been able to trace concerning this cycle.

Tivoli: the Hospital Church: the chancel arch with Sibyl medallions



very like the style of the painted Sibyls at Saluzzo, so like them indeed, that they could be by the same artist.

There are twelve Sibyls, painted under the Chancel arch, just as at Bienno (1498) in Piedmont. [See picture opposite.] Also, as at Bienno, the bulk of the individual prophecies is written below the pictures. However, these at Tivoli lack the charm and movement of the Bienno images, where the women lean out conversationally and vivaciously from their painted arches. Those at Tivoli are very static, head and shoulder pictures, contained in tondi. At Tivoli, one does not have any sense that the conventionally attractive young women are painted from life. There is no attempt whatsoever to give them either individuality or any indication of serious Humanist engagement with their classical origins. They have neither the virtues of portraiture nor Classical research. Settis tentatively attributes the cycle to Antoniazio Romano. The latest date for his death is 1512. It is attributed by some to Melozzo da Forlì, though I do not feel these frescos show his mastery of perspective and foreshortening. He left Rome in 1493, so if he were the artist the fresco is earlier than I think is possible on textual grounds.

The identity of the painter is not securely established, neither is the date. I place the fresco in the early years of the sixteenth century estimating that these Sibyls are late in the history of the genre on a basis of textual analysis. The text on the right-hand arch adheres to the canonical oracles and attribution strictly, thus demonstrating an awareness of the tradition. The fact that the designer of the text on the left-hand side of the arch feels free to diverge inventively from the strict canon suggests a weakening of the force of the perceived tradition as time progresses. Until Perugino and Raphael painted the single picture with a group of Prophets and a group of Sibyls in a landscape at the Collegio di Cambio in Perugia, in 1500, all the many cycles all over Italy adhere either to the canonical list of Sibylline Oracles, or to the Rimini / Sienese selection. By 1512 Rafael's Sibyls in the Sistine are wordless and his others in Santa Maria della Pace in 1514 are painted with almost no regard to the textual tradition and for the first time some oracles are in Greek.



Tivoli: The chancel arch: Sibillae Agrippa, Tiburtina and Cumana

It must be said however that there are other possibilities. The left-hand side, where we now see divergent text, is now far more attacked and destroyed by damp. If this has always been the case, the text (often added later *a secco*) may have flaked away and been repainted long after an understanding of the tradition had been lost. There is evidence of clumsy restoration, crude white, 'tidy' borders having been painted at the edges of the arches, occasionally transgressing and obscuring the text.

TEXT

The order of Sibyls recorded here reads from left to right when facing the altar, from the base of the arch on the left, up to the apex and then continuing down to the base of the arch on the right.³²⁶ [See pictures for original forms].

Sibyls 2, 3, 5 and 6, Tiburtina, Cumana, Eritrea and Cuma, are wholly or substantially different from the canonical text. Those on the right side of the arch however are strictly canonical, even though some of the oracles are curtailed, probably for reasons of space.

1: SIBILLA AGRIPPA

Sic ait: INVISIBLE

VERBUM PALPABITUR GERMINABIT(UR)

(E)T RADIX SICABITUR FOLIUM³²⁷

NON APPAREBIT VENUSTAS.

³²⁶ The inscriptions are rendered with contraction marks removed. I have marked conjectural original letters within brackets.

³²⁷ There is an 'E' missing now from the word 'ET'. I assume this is a lacuna of recent date because in Settis's photograph, the 'E' is present. I have inserted it here but surely this is either a scribal error for *ut*, found everywhere else, or uninformed retouching of Settis's photograph.



Tivoli: The left hand side of the chancel arch: Sibillae Agrippa and Tiburtina

This is very close to the first sentence of the canonical text. See Appendix 2 for translation and comparison.

2: SIBILLA TIBURTINA [See picture opposite]

Sic ait: NASCETUR

CHRISTUS BETHLEHEM PARTE

SUB FINIBUS INCLITA

VIRGO

QUA TAMEN EX UR(B)S

ADVENA NAZARET

Christ shall be born in Bethlehem, in a place within its confines. However, the renowned Virgin came from the town of Nazareth.

After the first three words, this is substantially different from the canonical text. It starts with identical words, but does not continue, '*et annuntiabitur in Nazareth*'.³²⁸ It is as though this text is taken from incomplete notes made by one who has seen another fresco, who remembers the first phrase and that the oracle also mentioned Nazareth, but text has been invented to fill the gap.

3: SIBILLA CUMANA

The text is almost completely lost but some few letters can be described with difficulty. These read either

Sic ait: ANGNU(?P/M) TEC OR ANGIU(?P/M) TEC.

³²⁸ It is as though a written source manuscript was damaged or partially lost and the deficit made up from the defective memory of one who had seen a cycle on which this is modelled, remembering that Nazareth was also mentioned. He may have read the canonical, *et annuntiabitur in Nazareth*, to mean, *the annunciation (by an Angel to the Virgin) will take place in Nazareth*.



Tivoli: left hand side of the sanctuary arch: Sibillae Cumana, Samia and Eritrea

Since the text is so ruined by damp and faded, little can be said with certainty, except that this does not seem to accord with anything in the canonical text. This supports the notion that the source manuscript, undoubtedly containing some canonical oracles, was damaged or curtailed in regard to a significant number of oracles and that other oracles were used here to supply the missing text.

4: SIBILLA SAMIA [See picture opposite]

(Initial lacuna probably caused by border painting, suggested letters within brackets.)

Sic ait: (EC)CE VENIET DIVES ET NASC(ETUR)

DE PAUPERCULA ET BESTIE TER

ARUM ADORABUNT EUM ET CLA

MABUNT ET DICENT LAUDATE

EUM ATRIIS CELORUM.

This is very close to the canonical text.

Thus she speaks: Behold, he who is rich will come to be born of a poor woman, and the wild beasts of the earth shall adore him and shall cry aloud, and say, 'Praise him in the Courts of Heaven'.

5: SIBILLA ERITREA [See picture overleaf]

Sic ait: ECCE DEO GENITUS

CELSO DEMISSUS OLI(?P/M)

HEBREA PASTUS VIR

GINIS UBERIBUS

Behold the son of God, sent down from on high, once fed from the breasts of a Hebrew Virgin.

This is completely heterodox.



Tivoli: left hand side of the chancel arch: Sibillae Eritrea and Cumaea



Tivoli: right hand side of the chancel arch: Sibilla Persica

6: SIBILLA CUMAEA

Sic ait: REX NOVUSIN TERRIS

REGES CUI DONA FERENTES

SUMITTENT SESE PR

OXIMA SECLA DABBIT

A new king (Lacuna: 'shall be born'?) on Earth. Kings who give gifts submit themselves. He will bring in the Next Age.

This is completely heterodox.

This marks the apex of the arch. After this point the quotations become virtually canonical again.

7: SIBILLA PZICA [See picture opposite]

Sic dixit: ECCE BESTIA CONC

ULCABERIS ET GIGNE

TUR DOMINUS IN ORBEM TERARUM ET

GREMIUM VIRGINIS ERIT SALUS

GENTIUM ET PEDES EIUS IN VALET-

UDINE HOMINIUM.³²⁹

Behold, He will tread down the beasts, and be begotten Lord of all the kingdoms of the world in the lap of a virgin, he will be the saviour of mankind and his feet bring the health of mankind.

This is very close to the canonical text. The only real difference is that it omits the last phrase, *Invisibile verbum palpabitur*.

³²⁹ Unlike all other pictures, which say, *sic ait*, this starts *sic dixit* on the frame of the tondo.

Tivoli: right hand side of the chancel arch



Sibilla Libica



Sibilla Delfica

8: SIBILLA LIBICA

Sic ait: ECCE VENIET DIES ET ILLU

MINABIT DOMINUS CONDENSE

TENEBRARUM ET SOLVETUR N

EXUS SINAGOGHE ET DESIN

ENT LABIA HOMINUM ET VIDEBUNT

REGEM VIVENTIUM.

Behold! The day will come when God will pierce the dense gloom with light and break the bond, Oh Synagogue, and the lips of men shall be shut and they will see the living King.

This is very close to the canonical text. See *Appendix 2: Table of Oracles*. It does, however, omit the end of the long canonical quotation.

9: SIBILLA DELFICA [See picture opposite]

Sic ait: NASCETUR PROFETA ABSQUE

MATRIS COUTU EX VIRG

INE EIUS.³³⁰

He will be born a prophet from a mother conceiving without coitus, from a virgin.

This is the canonical text.

10 : SIBILLA HELESPONTINA

In all the early cycles this prophecy is in the mouth of the Erithraean Sibyl. However, in the Revello MS., published in the 1490s, it is attributed to the Hellespontine. Thereafter,

³³⁰ *Coutu* surely a scribal error for *coitu*.

Tivoli: right hand side of the chancel arch



Sibilla Hellespontina



Sibilla Phrygia

in Rome, Saluzzo and Tivoli it is also attributed to the Hellespontine, but not at Spello or Bizzozzero which retain the earlier attribution. Thus a chain of influence may be detected.

Sic ait: DE EXCELXO CELORUM HABI (letters obliterated by border: TA)

CULO PROSPEXIT DEUS HABILES (lacuna: ? SUOS)

(lacuna: probably ET NASCETUR ES)T IN DIEBUS NOV (lacuna: ISSIMIS

DE VIRGIN)E HEBREA IN CUN

(ABILIS).³³¹

From the high habitation of Heaven, God has looked down on his humble (servants) and he shall be born in these latest days of a Hebrew Virgin in the cradle.

This is very close to the canonical text, only omitting the last word *terre*, translated as *of the Earth*.

11: SIBILLA (lacuna: PHRYGI)A [See picture opposite]

Sic ait: FLAGELLABIT DEUS POTENTES TER(RE)

EX OLINPO EXCELSUS VENIET

ET FIRMABIT(UR) CONSILIUM IN CELO

ET ANNUNTIABITUR VIRGO IN VALLIBUS

DESERTORUM.

Almighty God shall chastise the kings of the earth. From highest Heaven he will come, the Court of Heaven will judge and a virgin will be proclaimed in the desert valleys.

This is very close to the canonical text.

³³¹ *Excelxo* a form of *excelso*. *Humiles* everywhere else, not *habiles*; this is presumably a scribal error.



Tivoli: right hand side of the chancel arch: Sibilla Europa

12: SIBILLA EUROPA

VENIET ILLE ET TRANSIBIT

COLES ET MONTES ET LATICES.

He will come and will cross hills, mountains and valleys.

This is the first sentence of the canonical text. [See picture opposite]

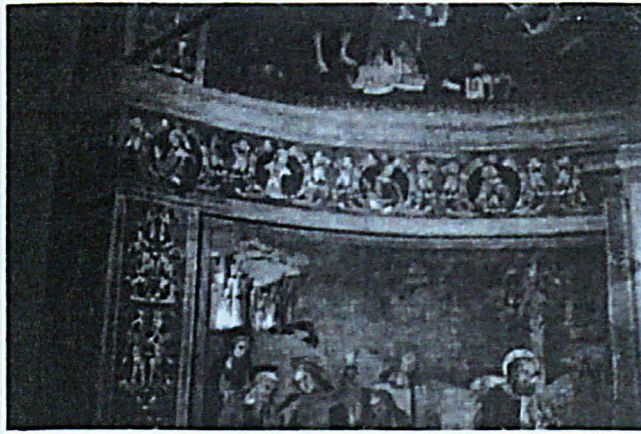
c. 1507 CORI

The Augustinian Church.

The date here is very conjectural. This is one of the only two examples of the sub-genre of Sibyl sites under church-arches outside the Lombardy / Piedmont region. If the date on the painting immediately below the frieze of Sibyls applies to the whole of the unified decorative scheme for the apse, then the painting was done in 1507. This was after the death of the man whom De Clercq asserts commissioned the extensive scheme of building and improvements at Cori.³³²

One must ask what a Lombardic form is doing to the South of Rome. The answer may well be the French connection. The form was invented and developed in a region under French, or French-influenced, rule. A taste for this form is predominantly French. De Clercq writes that the patron of the Augustinian Church was Cardinal Guillaume d'Estouteville, made Cardinal in 1439, who died in 1483, presumably leaving detailed plans for the completion of his church. In his Cardinalate he amassed numerous benefices and livings in Rome. There he proved himself a keen benefactor and patron of the Augustinian Canons, building a new church of St Augustine with a convent attached to it on the edge of Rome and

³³² See Carlo De Clercq, 'Contribution à l'iconographie des Sibylles II', pp.14-16. This seems the latest date that it could be and it may have been painted much earlier, perhaps in the lifetime of the patron. De Clercq opines that instructions for the format may have been left in a legacy that paid for the painting, although he estimates that the Sibyls were painted earlier than 1507.



Cori: the apse with a frieze of Sibyls in medallions

The two standing Sibyls to left and right at the base of the apsidal arch

building a Renaissance church immediately to the left of the mediaeval one, for the Augustinians at Cori, just South East of Rome.

The apsidal Renaissance chapel is decorated with frescos. These have the appearance of being late in the development of the form. It is a slightly transmuted version of the Lombardic and Piedmont form, with less engagement with the text of the oracles. There are two, full-figure standing Sibyls at the base of the apsidal arch on either side. However, instead of the rest of the head and shoulder portraits of the Sibyls continuing up and over the entrance arch, they have descended at an angle of 90°, and are painted in a semi-circular frieze at the head of the wall. [See picture opposite.]

The decorative scheme is as follows: at the base of each pillar is a Sibyl, at the top are the annunciation figures, the Angel Gabriel on the left and Mary on the right. Above the frieze of Sibyls in roundels, in the roof of the apse, is the Coronation of the Virgin, below it, Jesus with the apostles, dated 1507.

There is a full cycle of twelve Sibyls, two standing full figures, and ten roundels: four on each side and two in the middle, which are now no longer visible. This is late in the history of the genre. Sibyls have become a conventional visual symbol of Humanist intellectual status. However, here at Cori, as in the Sistine Chapel, there is no longer any text.

Cori: Sibyls in roundels in the apse



**PART III (CONTINUED): THE SIBYL CYCLES
OF CENTRAL AND NORTHERN ITALY.
SECTION II: THE SIBYL CYCLES AFTER THE
ADVENT OF THE PRINTED IMAGE**

**CHAPTER V: APOGEE AND DECLINE: SIBYLS
AS APARTMENT FRIEZES: A LATE RETURN TO
THE DOMESTIC SETTING**

**THE BORGIA APARTMENTS AND THE CASA
CAVASSA**

CHAPTER V: THE BORGIA APARTMENTS AND THE CASA CAVASSA

SIBYLS AS DECORATIVE FRIEZE

These two late sites mark a return of the genre to the domestic setting. One is one of the great works of the early Renaissance; the other is a comparatively crude provincial aping of what great ones do: a naïve but attractive adornment to a library, meant to add a note of intellectual gravitas.

1492-94: THE BORGIA APARTMENTS

This site comes late in the history of the genre. It does not fit into any of the four main sub-genres. Only the Casa Cavassa in Saluzzo (1507) shares its domestic frieze form, and any comparison only serves to accentuate the shortcomings of the provincial art at Saluzzo. The Casa Cavassa is however, the house of a prominent ecclesiastic. It therefore may be a modest emulation of the papal chamber.

Just as Piani Imperia transfers the domestic Orsini form to church use, so the Borgia Apartments Sibyl Room transfers the ecclesiastical twelve Sibyl cycle, confined within the borders of a frieze or the width of an arch architrave, to a private dwelling.

The series of rooms of which the Room of the Sibyls is a part were called the Camere Segrete, the Secret Chambers, to mark out private palace space from public audience rooms. I do not know whether the overall decorative scheme of these chambers was felt to be too advanced in Humanist involvement with pagan art and syncretism to be suitable for public viewing. Undoubtedly, there is a sense of secret knowledge, an understanding of pagan mysteries that are open only to the elite: potentially shocking to the more conventional among the lower clergy and laity.

These frescos by Pinturicchio are the last early Renaissance cycle of twelve Sibyls in a domestic setting. There are twelve Sibyls and twelve prophets in the lunettes constituting the frieze just below the ceiling. They are almost full figures, like the Orsini genre, but relegated



The Borgia apartments: Ezekiel and Sibilla Cimmeria, Jeremiah and Sibilla Frigia

to the upper margins of the room, rather than dominating the whole space with their presence. Like the church Cycles, they are confined to geometric framed spaces, whose shape echoes that of the quadrants of roof vaulting, a location for the contemporary genre of ecclesiastical Sibyls quartets, discussed in the following section. [See picture opposite.]

The alliance of the Sibyl Cycle with Egyptian imagery within a Neo-Platonist understanding of religious syncretism was given first, and daring, expression in Siena in 1481. It is in the early 1490s that these ideas were so far accepted in Humanist thought that they received a kind of Papal imprimatur in the decorative schemes for the Borgia apartments. There is already a readiness to traverse boundaries and explore paganism in a daring and unrestrained manner.

The Borgia apartments were built for Roderigo de Borgia, after what was regarded by many as a Simoniac election to the Papacy, as Pope Alexander VI. The apartments reflect the Egyptian interests of Giovanni Annio of Viterbo, (c. 1432-1502) the Pope's Humanist secretary. He probably designed the iconographic programme.³³³

Pinturicchio's art expressed Annio of Viterbo's Humanist, Neo-Platonist syncretism: an alliance between Classical Mythology, Egyptian wisdom and the Sibyls and Prophets. His most innovatory artistic techniques and forms have two main sources: Archaeology and Humanist Classical scholarship. Three events in these disciplines shaped the paintings: the recent discovery and excavation of the Domus Aurea, the Golden House of Nero, opposite the Coliseum; Ficino's translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*; the publication of the works of Diodorus, Plutarch and Tacitus who considered the pagan fables and pantheon as having symbolic moral and psychological significance. It is perhaps helpful to dwell briefly on these

³³³ See. Annio da Viterbo, *Actiquariatu variarum volumina*, XVII (Paris: [n. pub.], 1512) and Giehlow, K., 'Die Hieroglyphenkunde des Humanismus in der Allegorie der Renaissance', *Jarbuch de kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des aller höchsten Kaiserhauses*, XXXII, 1 (1915), pp. 1-232.

three significant sources to describe the intellectual landscape which finds expression in these frescos.

The excavation of the Domus Aurea, revealed new, or rediscovered architectural and decorative possibilities and techniques. Raphael and companions were let down on ropes to the then subterranean 'grottoes', after which the fantastic hybrid animals were always called 'grotesques'. In the Neronian house, the richest decoration was often on the ceilings; one should not forget the Roman luxurious habit of reclining on couches to eat, converse or indulge in other pleasurable activities, so that the direction of gaze is upward. Pinturicchio and his contemporaries shifted the emphasis of decorative schemes to include the ceiling, perhaps as uncomfortable and difficult for Renaissance Italians to enjoy as for the modern observer.

The scholarly Humanist translations and publications conditioned the thinking of Annio and others and the design of the scheme for these rooms. The *Corpus Hermeticum* is a collection of works of revelation on theological, occult, and philosophical subjects ascribed to the Egyptian god Thoth. His name in Greek is Hermes Trismegistos (Hermes the Thrice-Greatest). He was said to be the inventor of writing and the patron of all the arts dependent on writing. Written in Greek and Latin, the *Corpus Hermeticum* probably dates from the middle of the first to the end of the third century AD. It was written in the form of Platonic dialogues. There are two main categories: 'popular' Hermetism, which deals with astrology and other occult sciences; and 'learned' Hermetism, concerned with theology and philosophy. Renaissance scholars believed the material, and Hermes himself, to predate Moses, so he is seen as the prototype and progenitor of all learning and lawgiving. This view of him is inscribed by his image on the floor at the great West Door of Siena Cathedral. Ficino had both this manuscript and that of Plato's *Symposium*, and was asked by Lorenzo de' Medici's father to translate the strange Egyptian text first since he considered it to be more important.

The influential texts on the design of these rooms were as follows:

Diodorus Siculus was a Greek historian, born in the first century BC in Agyrium, Sicily. He was the author of a universal history, *Bibliotheca Historica*, a compendium undistinguished in itself, but which preserves the writings of very many previous Classical historians. It is through Diodorus Siculus that much of Ephorus's thought has come down to us, from which we derive our knowledge of the strange cult of Avernus.

Plutarch was born in AD 46, in Chaeronea, Boeotia and died after 119. He was a biographer and historian whose attitude to religion is expressed in the *Moralia* in the essay, 'Daemon of Socrates', and three later works concerning Delphi, *On the Failure of the Oracles*, in which the decline of the oracle is linked with demographic decline, *On the E at Delphi*, interpreting the word EI at the temple entrance, and *On the Pythian Responses*, seeking to re-establish belief in the oracle. Contemporary with these is *On Isis and Osiris*, with its mystical interpretation of the myth. Plutarch affirms that the Egyptians based their sacred symbolism on natural phenomena, which depend on an esoteric relationship with the nature of the gods.

Tacitus (56-c.120 AD) Although a lawyer he is remembered as an historian of his own times, chronicling the political situation that followed Nero's death to the close of the Flavian dynasty. Moving to Rome, in 88 he attained a praetorship (a post with legal jurisdiction) and became a member of the priestly college that kept the Sibylline Books of prophecy and supervised foreign-cult practice. His rational approach sees Roman Religion as having a moral and spiritual value for the educated, sophisticated man when considered as an allegorical expression of higher truth. He can believe in direct revelation and prophecy.

In the light of the recent Humanist translations of newly discovered texts, Classical, Egyptian and Jewish Myth and History were seen to have common themes and to share a degree of enlightenment whose full expression was to be found in the revealed Truth of Christianity. This is the way in which the past cultural history of the Mediterranean, of which the Sibyls form a part, is shown on the walls of the Borgia Apartments.

Rome: The Borgia Apartments: Phigia, Delphica and Eritea



TEXT

The text here demonstrates a very close adherence to the canonical tradition of contemporary Sibyl Cycles in Northern and Central Italy.³³⁴ As in other locations, the text on many of the scrolls has come away. This probably indicates that the lettering was applied *a secco*. Text is very difficult to read. The scribe often starts the inscription writing from left to right in the normal way, and when, in the design, the scroll floats backward, he begins to write from right to left, with many letters written backwards or upside-down, as, for example, in the Delphica's inscription. When this is added to the problem of the letters themselves deteriorating, the text becomes difficult to decipher with certainty. Only those letters still appearing on the fresco itself are here recorded.

SIBILLA PHIGIA

DE OLIMPO EXCELSUS VENIET ET ANUNTIABITUR VIRGO IN
VALLIBUS DESERTORUM. SIBILA PHIGIA.

This is a shortened version of the canonical text for the Phrygia. [See picture opposite]

³³⁴ The following transcription is semi-diplomatic: I have removed contraction marks but preserved eccentric spelling. There are three Sibyls above each of the walls. They are presented here in the order in which they occur, reading from left to right round the room, starting with the Sibyl to the left of the only window.

SIBILLA DELPHICA

**NASCI DEBERE PROPHETAM ABSHAE MARIA-----COITU. S.
DELPHICA.**

This can be seen to be a paraphrase of the canonical quotation. *Abshae* is likely to be a rendering of *absque*.

SIBILLA ERITREA

**NASCETUR IN DIEBUS NOVISSIMIS DE VIRGINE HEBREA IN-----BU--
SIBILLA ERITRA.**

(Parts of this text are so faded as to be entirely illegible.) This is the second line of the canonical text for the Sibylla Eritrea.

Rome: The Borgia Apartments: Sibyllae Cumana, Europa and Agrippa



SIBILLA CUMANA

This is very faded in the parts marked:

**IAM REDIT ET —REDEU— SATURNA —A IAM NOVA PROGENIES
CAELO DIMITTITUR ALTO SIBILLA CUMANA.**

This is composed from the fourth and fifth lines of Virgil's Messianic Eclogue: part of the canonical text.

SIBILLA EUROPA

**VENIET ILLE ET TRANSIBIT IN (?IES IT-) COLES ET REGNABIT IN
PAUPERTATE ET DOMINABITUR IN SILENCIAM. SIBILLA UROPEA.**

This is part of the canonical text for this Sibyl.

SIBILLA AGRIPA

**INVISIBILE VERBUM PALPABITUR UT RADIX ET NON APAREBIT
VENUSTAS EUS CIRUMDABITUR.**

A shortened rendering of the canonical text. [See picture opposite]

Rome: The Borgia Apartments: Sibillae Samia, Persica and Libica



SIBILLA SAMIA

**ECCE VENIET DIVES ET NASCETURE DE PAUPERCULA ET BESTIE
TERRARUM ADORABUNT EUM.**

The first two lines only of the canonical text.

SIBILLA PERSICA

At the beginning of the scroll the text is completely obliterated.

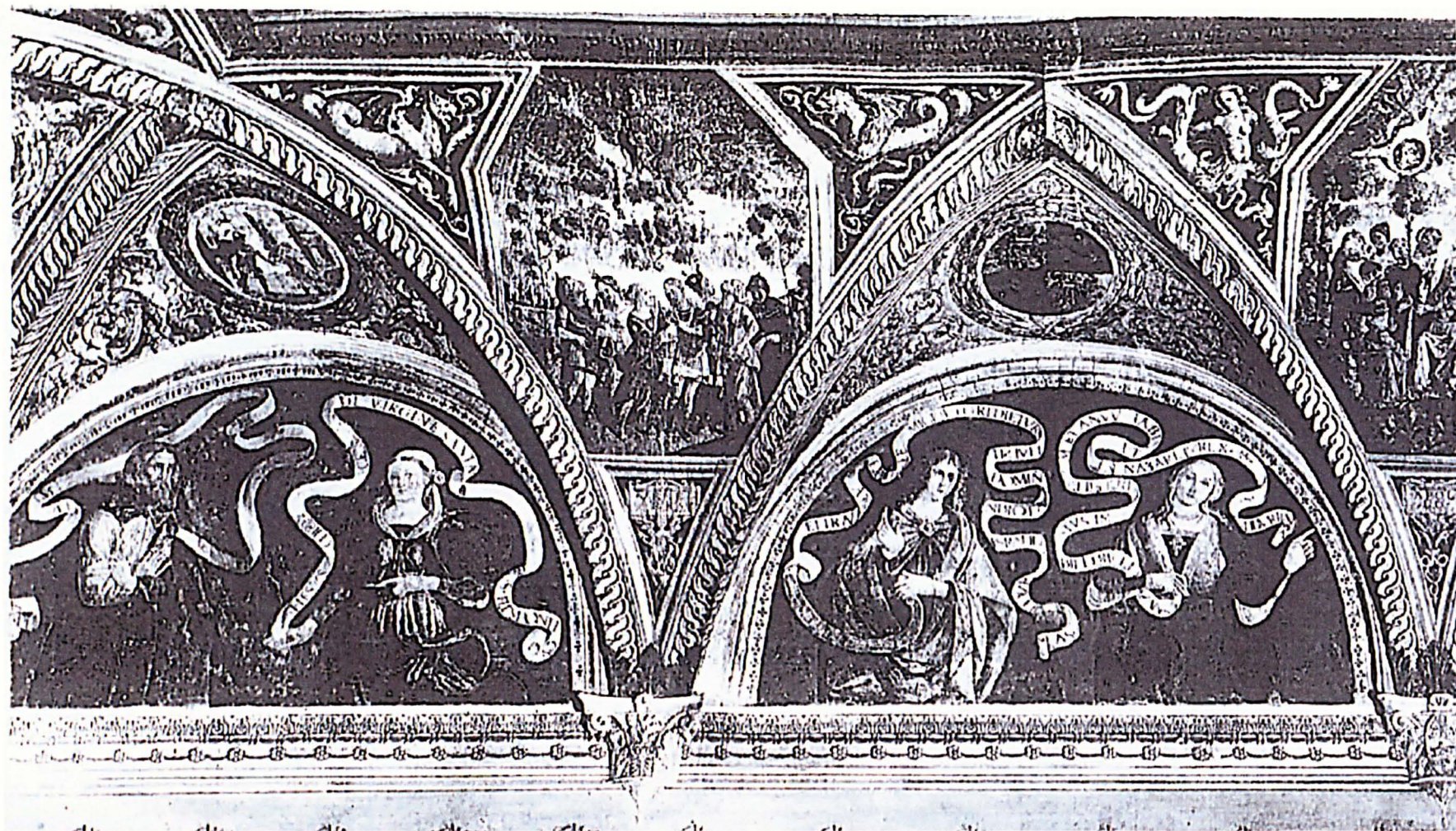
----- **IN GREMIUM VIRGINIS ERIT SALUS GENCIUM S. PERSIA.**

This is a line from the canonical oracle of the Persica.

SIBILLA LIBICA

The text is so deteriorated as to be indecipherable with certainty even though remnants of letters remain. Much of the text appears to be written backwards, in a perverse way, following the folds of the scroll. An 'x' can be descried, and the sequence DEBUNT, written backwards. Both of these can be found in the canonical text for the Libica, so it unlikely that this oracle diverges radically from the canon, since none of the others diverge.

Rome: The Borgia Apartments: Sibillae Elespontica, and Tiburtina



SIBILLA ELESFONTICA

HESUS CHIS—CE—DE VERGINE SANTA—S. ELESFONTICA.

This is a paraphrase of the canonical text.

SIBILLA TIBURTINA

The text has lacunae.

**NASCETUR CHRISTUS IN B—LEHEM ET ANUNTIABITU- IN NAZARET
REX S. TIBURTINA.**

A single line of the canonical text. [See picture opposite]

Vatican: the Borgia Apartments: Ezekiel and Sibilla Cimmerica, Jeremiah and Sibilla Phigia



SIBILLA CIMERIA

**UT FACE PROLIXA CAPILIIS SEDNS SUPER SEDIE STRATA NUTRIT
PUERUM DANS EI LAC PROPRIUM. S. CIMERIA.**

This is a paraphrase of the canonical text.

At this point the frieze in the Borgia Apartments ends. [See picture opposite]

Casa Cavassa: the Room of the Sibyls



c. 1507: SALUZZO

Casa Cavassa, the Room of the Sibyls: a cycle of 12 Sibyls.

The Casa Cavassa Cycle is the only one in the region to be in a domestic setting, not a church. It is the last of the Sibyl cycles to be painted in Piedmont and Lombardy, and is very late. Like the much greater fresco in the Borgia apartments, it takes the form of a frieze at the top margin of the walls. The Room of the Sibyls is on the first floor of the mansion and was perhaps used as a study. [See picture opposite.] The artist is not known, but it strikes me that the painter of the Sibyls here and at Tivoli may be one and the same, so similar is Tivoli in form and style. These Sibyls, like those at Tivoli, have an air of being line drawings, coloured in. Both cycles are paintings in roundels, with text inserted into the round border.

The Casa Cavassa was built in the quattrocento. In the mid fourteen hundreds, it became the famous home of the Saluzzo branch of the Cavassa family, parvenus who did however, very quickly achieve an ascendancy in the court of the Marquises of Saluzzo. In 1464, Galeazzo Cavassa was the Vicar General of the marquise, a preferment subsequently filled by his son, Francesco from 1502. It may well be that the Baldini manuscripts were in the Cavassa library because the paintings and sculptures show a clear correspondence with those designs. The house was much restored in the 1880s. The restorers were either appropriately conservative in their endeavours, or apparently unaware of the Baldini connection and the existence of lists of canonical Sibylline oracles, since the gaps in text remain. Because of a knowledge of the canonical source documents I can complete some of the damaged inscriptions. A written record of the original oracles should perhaps be available at the site.

The influence of the Baldini engravings on the design at the Casa Cavassa

The presence and design of the sculptures of Sibyls in the church means that copies of the Baldini engravings were in a library in Saluzzo as early as the 1490s. It is not therefore

Comparison between the Casa Cavassa Delphica and the Baldini Delphica
 Note the exactly similar horn



C.II.3,a



C.II.3,b

THE SIBYLS: FINE AND BROAD MANNERS
 THE DELPHIAN SIBYL

surprising that they were used as source material to draw up designs for the Sibyl fresco cycle at the Casa Cavassa.

Evidence for the artist having looked at the Baldini engravings, published in 1478, is as follows. In the picture of the Sibilla Delphica, the horn she carries is identical with that on the Baldini Delphica. [See picture opposite] The Sibilla Erythea is dressed as a nun, an idea that originated in the Baldini engravings. She carries a sword in her right hand in just the manner of the Baldini design, a motif so bizarre that it cannot be fortuitous. The Hellespontica sports the Baldini turban, a copy in every particular; she does not however, wear the ligature under the chin. The Sibilla Tiburtina's headgear appears to be a rather unsuccessful rendering of the Baldini second edition. One does not know how much these frescoes were re-drawn in the restoration process. [See picture opposite and on following pages.]

Order: The Sibyls are painted as a frieze immediately below the ceiling on the three internal walls of the room. The wall containing windows to the exterior continues the frieze but this section is entirely different in that it is painted with a continuous rural landscape. The whole number of Sibyls fits decorously onto three walls. There are three Sibyls on each of the end walls over the entrance and exit doors, and six on the long wall facing the windows. The order in which I shall discuss the Sibyls is the order in which they appear in the room, reading from left to right, starting with the Sibyl above the entrance door. They are Persica, Lybica, Delphica, Cimeria, Erythaea, Samia, Cumana, Helespontina, Phrygia, Tiburtina, Agripina, Europa. Apart from the last two Sibyls, Agripina and Europa, which are transposed, the Saluzzo Cycle keeps rigorously to the order in which the Orsini Sibyls appeared and is substantially faithful to their text, though often contracting or paraphrasing because of the very small amount of space in the borders of the roundels.

Comparison between the Casa Cavassa Erythea and the Baldini Erythea
 Note the exactly similar nun's habit, posture and manner of carrying a sword



C.II.5.A



C.II.5.B

THE SIBYLS : FINE AND BROAD MANNERS
 THE ERYTHREAN SIBYL

Comparison between the Casa Cavassa Helespontina and the Baldini Hellespontica

Note the exactly similar turban that had come to mark her identity by 1507



II.8.a



C.II.8.b

THE SIBYLS : FINE AND BROAD MANNERS
THE HELLESPOINTINE SIBYL

Comparison between the Casa Cavassa Tiburtina and the Baldini Tiburtina
 Note the attempt at the helmet rather similar to the Baldini second edition



C.II.10,a



C.II.10,b

THE SIBYLS : FINE AND BROAD MANNERS
 THE TIBURTINE SIBYL



Saluzzo: Casa Cavassa: Sibilla Persica



Saluzzo: Casa Cavassa: Sibilla Lybica

PERSICA: [See picture opposite]

**GIGNETUR DOMINUS UNIVERSI GENTIUM SALUS IN VIRGINE ERIT ET
FIET NOBIS HOC VERBUM PALPABIE**

*The Godhead will be begotten the saviour of all mankind, and this Word
incarnate will be born for us from a Virgin*

It is a concise version of the canonical oracle which runs:

**Ecce bestia conculcaberis et gignetur dominus in orbem terrarum. / Et
gremium virginis erit salus gentium et pedes eius in valitudine hominum.
Invisibile verbum palpabitur. (Revello MS.)**

*Behold, He will tread down the beasts, and be begotten Lord of all the kingdoms
of the world in the lap of a virgin, he will be the saviour of mankind and his feet
bring the health of mankind. The invisible Word will be made palpable flesh.*

LIBICA:

**REGINA GENTIUM TENEBIT GREMIO VENIENTEM DIEM ET LATENTIA
APARIENTEM**

*The Queen of mankind shall take the cradle in the day which is to come and that
which is hidden shall be revealed.*

It is a curtailed version of the canonical oracle which runs:

**Ecce veniet dies et illuminabit dominus condempsa (sic) tenebrarum, / et
solvetur nexus synagoge. / Et desinent labia hominum et videbunt regem
viventium. Et tenebit illum in gremio virgo domina gentium / et regnabit in
misericordia / et uterus matris eius erit statera cunctorum. (sic) (Revello
MS.)**

*Behold! The day will come when God will pierce the dense gloom with light and
break the bond, Oh Synagogue, and the lips of men shall be shut and they will
see the living King. He will be held in a virgin's lap, The Queen of all mankind*



Saluzzo: Casa Cavassa: Sibilla Delphica



Saluzzo: Casa Cavassa: Sibilla Cimeria

*and he will reign in mercy and his mother's womb shall be the measure
(literally, 'balance' or 'yoke-pole') of all things.*

DELPHICA: [See picture opposite]

NASCETUR PROPHETA ABSOVE HUMANA CORRUPTIONE.

He will be born a Prophet, free from human corruption.

This is a paraphrased version of the canonical oracle for the Delphica: (I take *absove* to be *absolve*.)

Nascetur propheta absque matris coytu ex virgine eius. (Revello MS.)

He will be born a prophet from a mother conceiving without coitus, from a virgin.

CIMERIA:

**IN PUERITA SUA CUM FACIE PULCHERRIMA PUERUM NUTRIET SUO
LACTE COELITUS MISSO.**

In his childhood, with a beautiful face, she will feed her Son, giving him the milk of Heaven.

This is a paraphrase of the latter part of the canonical oracle.

**In prima facie virginis ascendit puella quaedam necans gladiis: vastans
gentes Egypti et ex pulcra facie. Prolixa capillis sedés super sedem stratam
nutrit puerum dans ei ad comedendum lac proprium. (Edinburgh MS.)**

*In the first appearance of the Virgin, this maiden ascends killing with swords:
laying waste the people of Egypt with her beautiful glance. With an abundance
of hair, sitting upon a couch, she nourishes her son, giving him his own milk to
eat.*



Saluzzo: Casa Cavassa: Sibilla Erythrea



Saluzzo: Casa Cavassa: Sibilla Samia

ERYTHREA:

**MORTE MORIETUR TRIBUS DIEBUS SOMNO SUCEPTO ET MOX AB
INFERIS AD LUCEM VENIET**

*Having died the death and undergone a sleep of three days, he shall soon come
from Hell to the light.*

This is the first real variation from the canonical source. The Erythraean Sibyl's oracle is unstable in the cycles of Northern Italy unlike all the other Sibylline oracles. This suggests that the hand-written early source text was damaged or curtailed in regard to this Sibyl's oracle fairly early in the history of the genre. Here, the source oracle is paraphrased from the alternative canonical list for stone carved Sibyls but is also that of the Baldini Erythraea (Oracle Q on Appendix 2: Table of Oracles.). That fact supports the visual evidence that the artist was working with the Baldini engravings as a source: [See picture opposite]

**Et mortus fatum finiet, trium dierum somno suscepto tunc a mortis
regressus, in lucem veniet primum resurrectionis initium ostendens.**
(Source: Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* IV 19, 297-98.)

*He shall accomplish the fate of death, having undergone a sleep of three days.
Then being returned from the dead, he shall come into the light, showing the
first beginning of the resurrection.*

SAMIA:

**ECCE VENIET DIVES ET E PAUPERE NASCETUR ET BELVAI EUM
ADORABUNT**

*Behold! He who is rich will be born from poverty and the wild beasts will
worship him.*

This is very close to the canonical list, and is always in the mouth of the Samian:

**Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de paupercula, / et bestie terrarum adorabunt
eum, / clamabunt et dicent: laudate eum in stellis celorum. (Edinburgh MS.)**



Saluzzo: Casa Cavassa: Sibilla Cumana



Saluzzo: Casa Cavassa: Sibilla Helespontina

Behold, he who is rich will come to be born of a poor woman, and the wild beasts of the earth shall adore him and shall cry aloud, and say, 'Praise him in the Courts of Heaven'.

CUMANA:

IAM REDIT ET VIRGO REDEUNT SATURNIA REGNA

Now also, the Virgin returns, and the rule of Saturn comes again.

This is part of the oracle for the Cumana in the canonical list: [See picture opposite]

**Ultima cumei venit iam carminis aetas / Magnus ab integro seculorum
nascitur ordo. / Iam reddit et virgo, redeunt saturna regna; / jam nova
progenies e cello dimittitur alto. / Tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea
primum / desinet ac toto surget gens aurea mundo, / casta fave Lucina:
tuus iam regnat Apollo. (Edinburgh MS.)**

(These are lines 5-10 of Virgil's *Eclogue IV*.)

*Now the last period of Cumaean song has come. The great succession of Ages is
born again from the beginning, / Now also, the Virgin returns, and the rule of
Saturn comes again, / Now a new progeny descends from high Heaven. / You,
Oh chaste Lucina, favour the Boy whose birth will end the first age of Iron and
raise a golden race through all the world: now your Apollo rules.*

HELESPONTINA:

NASCETUR DEUS IN DIEBUS NOVISSIMIS DE VIRGINE HEBREA

God will be born in the newest age, from a Hebrew maiden.

Unusually, this is a slightly lengthened version of the canonical oracle:

Iesus Christus nascetur de Casta.. (Edinburgh MS.)

Jesus Christ will be born of the Pure One.



Saluzzo: Casa Cavassa: Sibilla Frigia



Saluzzo: Casa Cavassa: Sibilla Tiburtina

FRIGIA:

**EX OLIMPO EXCELSUS VENIET ET ANUNTIABITUR VIRGO IN
VALLIBUS DESERTORUM**

*From highest Heaven he will come and a virgin will be proclaimed in the desert
valleys*

This is a shortened version of the canonical text of the Phrigia. [See picture opposite]

**Flagellabit deus potentes terre ex olimpo excelsus veniet et firmabitur
concilium in celo et annunciabitur virgo in vallibus desertorum.**³³⁵
(Edinburgh MS.)

*Almighty God shall chastise the kings of the earth. From highest Heaven he will
come, the Court of Heaven will judge and a virgin will be proclaimed in the
desert valleys.*

TIBURTINA

**NASCETUR IN BETLEM ANUNTIABITUR IN NAZARETH REGNANTE
TAURO PACIFICO**

*He will be born in Bethlehem and he shall be announced in Nazareth, the
peaceful Taurus reigning.*

This is part of the long oracle of the canonical Tiburtina:

³³⁵ Gagliardo observes: (f.n. 43, p. 46) 'In the vernacular tradition we find the not very significant word, '*potenti*' It is found in the following manuscripts: the codex of the Biblioteca Riccardiana aforementioned (oracle of the Phrygian Sibyl, c. 71v); in the words of the Sibylla Cumana in the *Annunciation* play by Belcari (these are also in the first five verses spoken by the Sibylla Frigia previously noted in Banfi, *Sacre Rappresentazione*, p. 80) and finally in the Revello *Passione* Prologur A, the angel to Sibylla Phrygia; Prologue B, the angel to the Sibylla Phrygia (Cornagliotti, pp. 20, 17.)'

**Nascetur Christus in Bethleem: et annunciabitur in Nazareth / regnante
tauro pacifico fundatore quietis. / O felix illa mater cuius ubera illum
lactabunt / Item nascetur Christus. In diebus illis / exurget mulier de stirpe
hebreorum, nomine Maria, habens sponsum Joseph, / et procreabitur ex ea
sine commestione viri de Spiritu Sancto filius Dey, nomine Ihesus, / et ipsa
erit virgo in partu et post partum. / Qui ergo ex ea nascetur erit verus Deus
et verus homo, / sicut omnes prophete predicaverunt, / et permanebit
regnum eius in secula seculorum. (Revello MS. the Edinburgh MS. only gives
the first three lines.)**

*Christ shall be born in Bethlehem and he shall be announced in Nazareth, the
peaceful Taurus reigning, founder of rest. Oh happy that mother whose breast
shall suckle him. Thus Christ shall be born. In those days a woman shall spring
from the root of the Hebrews, called Mary, espoused to Joseph, and from her
will be born, without carnal knowledge of a man, by the Holy Spirit, the Son of
God, called Jesus. And the same woman shall be a virgin at the time of the birth
and thereafter. That which is to be born from her shall therefore be true God
and true man, thus all the prophets predict, and he shall reign forever and ever.*

The source of this is not known to me. It is neither Lactantius nor Varro, the usual sources for the Sibyls' oracles. I have seen the suggestion that it is an Italic folk poem but no evidence for this was adduced.



Saluzzo: Casa Cavassa: Sibilla Agripina



Saluzzo: Casa Cavassa: Sibilla Europa

AGRIPINA:

**INVISIBILE VERBUM HOC PERMITTIT ... ANG...CONVERSABITUR UT
PECCATOR.**

The Invisible Word let free in this place...(?)... so that the sinner may be converted.

In situ, this is looks as though it has been heavily restored over older indecipherable text, without the knowledge of the canonical body of oracles. If that is so then the words, 'hoc permittit', may be a failed guess for, 'palpabitur'. The text then is left blank and I suspect another erroneous guess is made in the letters 'ang'. The beginning and end of the quotation show that it is likely to be derived from the canonical oracle for the Sibilla Agrippa which runs: [See picture opposite]

**Invisibile verbum palpabitur, / et germinabit ut radix, siccabitur ut folium /
et non apparebit venustas eius. / Circumdabitur alvus maternus et flebit
Deus letitia sempiterna, / et ab hominibus conculcabitur. / Nascetur ex
matre ut Deus et conversabitur ut peccator. (Revello MS).**

*The invisible word will be made palpable flesh and though he will spring as
from the root, he will be withered like a leaf and will not appear beautiful. He
will be confined by his mother's womb. God, the eternal joy, will weep and will
be despised of men. He will be born from his mother as God, that the sinner
may be converted.*

EUROPA:

The greater part of this oracle is lost, save for that at the bottom of the roundel which reads:

REGNABIT IN PAUPERTATE

He will reign in poverty.

This seems to have been a short extract or rather, a paraphrase, from the canonical oracle for the Europa which is as follows:

**Veniet ille et transibit colles et montes et lattices olympi silvarum, /
regnabit in paupertate et dominabitur in silencio, / et egredietur de utero
virginis.** (Revello MS. Edinburgh varies only in the spelling of *olimpi*.)

He will come and will cross valleys, mountains and forested Olympian heights.

*He will reign in poverty and will himself be governed remaining silent, being
born of a virgin's womb.*

Further Sibyls in Saluzzo

Marco Piccat relates that he believes there to be the remains of a cycle in Saluzzo in the old Church house, now said to be the residence of a Carmelite community [My translation.]:³³⁶

A new cycle of Sibyls and Prophets is recently identified in Saluzzo by N. GABRIELLI, in his excellent work on the art of the Marquisate. [...] The frieze of which this is an integral part adorns the top of the wall of a room on the first floor of the house formerly call the Casa della Chiesa, in the part of the town on the crest of the hill, a little way from the Church of San Giovanni. An attentive examination of the pictorial rendering of the fresco has enabled me to recognise various adherents of the family then owning the house. It was not possible to identify further or different iconographic significance.

Piccat says the house now belongs to the Carmelites. Despite searching for days and consulting the Carmelites, the only Sibyl frescos I was able to find were in the Casa Cavassa, itself on the crest of a hill not far from the Church of San Giovanni. It has a frieze round the top of the wall in a room on the first floor of the house, with one wall decorated with

³³⁶ Piccat, f.n. 97 p. 34.

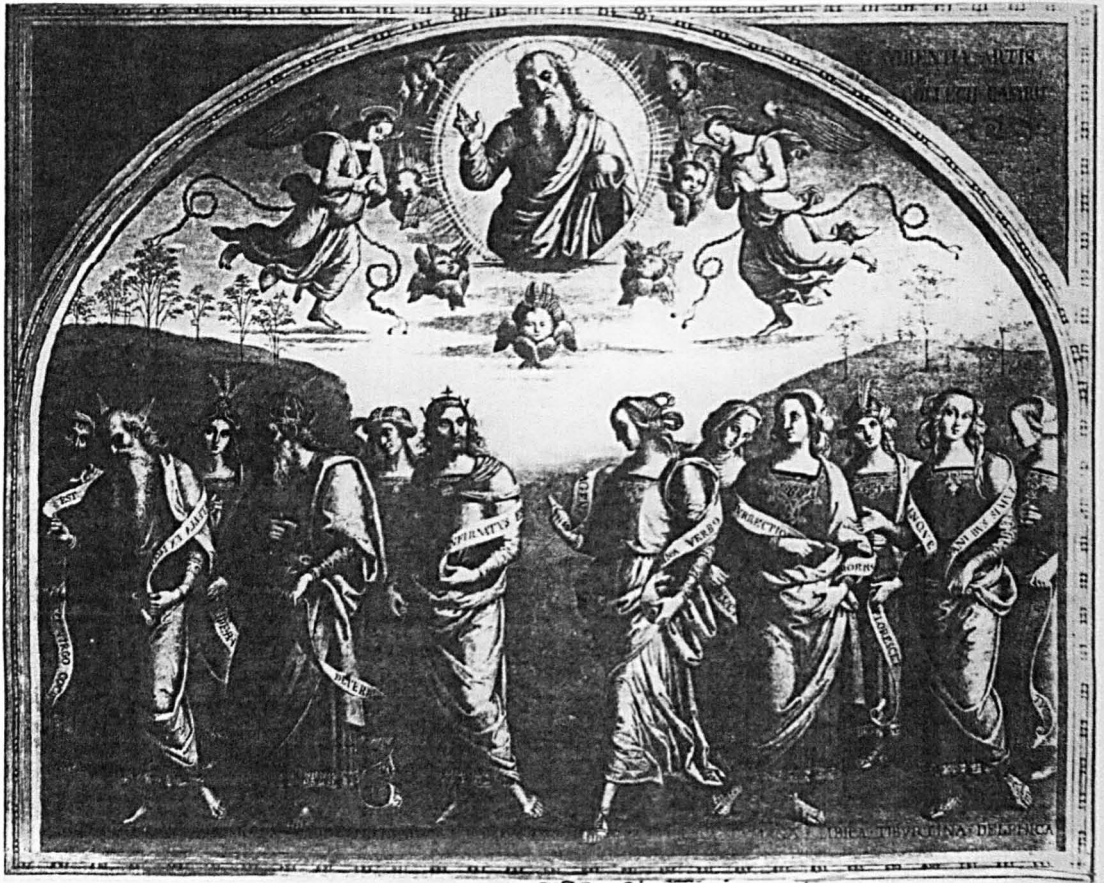
landscape. However, I wonder if there is confusion here. I had conversations with the Carmelites who do have frescos, but they are later and nothing to do with Sibyls or Prophets but *grisaille* seventeenth-century renderings of Old Testament epics.

**PART III (CONTINUED): THE SIBYL CYCLES
OF CENTRAL AND NORTHERN ITALYSECTION**

**SECTION II: THE SIBYL CYCLES AFTER THE
ADVENT OF THE PRINTED IMAGE**

**CHAPTER VI: THE DIMINUTION OF THE
TRADITION: QUARTETS IN CENTRAL ITALY:
1480-1514**

PERUGIA: THE CAMBIO: RAPHAEL AND PERUGINO: PROPHETS AND SIBYLS



There are six prophets and six Sibyls: Erythraea, Persica, Cumana, Libica Tiburtina and Delphica. The front row, Erythraea, Cumana and Tiburtina, substantially obscure the others. The scrolls are not so much held, but wrapped round the body, in the manner of a stole. The folds of the clothes and the bodies of the figures obscure the much of the text. Late in the history of the genre, this is symbolic of the diminution of the importance of text as the genre declines. The visible words show that the oracles are entirely heterodox. The impression is that the designer is aware that Sibyls and Prophets ought to say things about the Redemption of the world, but does not have the common source, or any other source, to hand. Sibyls are therefore given a scattering of likely words, few of them written in full and often with the vital stem or ending missing, placed on the scrolls that the genre requires. There are no full sentences or cogent phrases. Since these 'oracles' have no secure relationship with any other cycle, and there is a doubt as to whether they have any real meaning, they are neither included in the Appendix list of Sibylline Oracles nor in the table of corresponding oracles.

TEXT

ERYTHRAEA:	—MNIA VERBO ... —AGENS.
PERSICA:	FLUC(T/I ?)...
CUMANA:	MORS—SURECTION...
LIBICA:	FLORESCET ...
TIBURTINA:	PANIBUS SIMUL ... INQUE.
DELPHICA:	TUO.

CHAPTER VI: QUARTETS IN CENTRAL ITALY

THE DIMINUTION OF THE TRADITION: QUARTETS IN CENTRAL ITALY 1480-1514

At first, Sibyls had been strange and exotic creatures, prophesying the coming of Christ but also provoking curiosity and a series of questions, about their nature and origins and consequently about the relationship between their pagan Classical culture and Christian orthodoxy. The Borgia Sibyls were painted at the height of Savonarola's power, two years before he ruled Florence. The debate about the status of Classicism, seemingly settled by a Ficinian gentle syncretism, was revived and embittered by Savonarola's magnetic preaching and rigorous and absolutist stand. It was a re-affirmation of Jerome's view that the good Christian eschewed the pomps and delusions of Classical Myth and Literature. However, before the advent of Savonarola, the trope, in Florence and the rest of Central Italy, was losing its power to surprise and intrigue, and becoming familiar, especially after the advent of printing. Familiarity, if it did not breed contempt, lessened the need for extension and full expression. An abbreviated reference could be made to Sibyls rather than there being a need to make a full statement. The number of Sibyls could be reduced, and shortened or paraphrased versions of the canonical text could be used.

Eventually, even the textual canon itself appears to have been lost or ignored and invented text, or a scattering of likely sounding words on scrolls partly obscured by bodies or clothing, appears. An example of that is Perugino and Raphael's fresco in Perugia, painted in 1500. Eventually, the Sibyls are silenced. As before remarked, the Sibyls of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel (1508-12) have blank scrolls, or a book with the semblance of writing upon it but not a real word. As the fame of the artists commissioned and the quality of the pictures increased, the intensity of the intellectual engagement with what the Sibyls say, and their gnomic and mysterious meaning, lessened. They are indeed, in the late fifteenth century, painted by the masters of the age. They become though, an adornment not a complex idea. Pinturicchio's quartets are pretty, not problematic.

Arguably the Borgia apartments mark the high point in the development of the intellectual framework of ideas that the Sibyl Cycle typified. At the very moment when the trope reached the height of intellectual development in Rome, the beginning of the ebb tide had already begun in Florence. Four Sibyls out of the canon of twelve could be seen as sufficient to suggest intellectual gravitas on the part of the patron, and a reverence for Classical learning. The trope of four Sibyls fitted conveniently into the quadrants of the vaulting of a commemorative or funerary chapel and this mode is often found in Central Italy. The first quartet of Sibyls appears in the Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinità in Florence in 1480, in a most beautiful, but wholly conventional bourgeoisie iconographic scheme.



Florence: general view of the Sassetti Chapel

FLORENCE: 1480-85 THE SASSETTI CHAPEL: SANTA TRINITÀ

Ghirlandaio: Four Sibyls in the quadrants of the ceiling vaulting. None of them bears a name. These are related to the external fresco above the chapel arch, of the Tiburtine Sibyls prophecy of the coming of Christ to the Emperor Augustus.

The chapel was built in troublous times in Florence. Sassetti's young son died the year that Giuliano de Medici was murdered in church, killed as a result of the Pazzi conspiracy, to which the Pope, Sixtus IV, Francesco della Rovere, had given tacit support. [See picture opposite]

Francesco Sassetti (b. 1421)

Sassetti was a banker who made a fortune in Geneva. He became the director of the Medici bank in 1469. He was an amateur Humanist and made a considerable collection of manuscripts and coins. This is however, bourgeois and conservative taste. The presence of four unidentified Sibyls, crowning this beautiful little Chapel, shows the extent to which they had become conventional.

The Chapel is not strictly a mortuary chapel, as so many of these family chapels are, but rather one celebrating rebirth and young life as well as mourning. The motive for the construction of the chapel and its iconographic scheme is an affecting one. It was built in sorrow and gratitude. Sassetti's young son, Teodoro, the hope of his later years, died and then quite unexpectedly, when he was about fifty-six, a male baby was born to him, in 1478-9, Teodoro II. He made a vow of thanksgiving and the Chapel is the result.

The dedication is a double one, to St Francis (Sassetti's name saint) and the Nativity (in celebration of and thanksgiving for, the birth of his son). There is also a strong element of local patriotism. This triple concern controls the iconographic scheme, which celebrates Sassetti's life, concerned with the making of money in banking. This is humbly recognised not to be the perfect life for a Christian: ambivalence about usury dogged the Medici as well

as their administrators. The ironies of the contrast between the life of the Saint after whom he is named and Sassetti's own life are fully realised. Sassetti's life has perhaps borne its share of punishment and grief. The loss of an heir to the fortune he had spent his life in founding, must have seemed like God's punishment, exemplifying the futility of concern with transient worldly goods. However, the frescos tell the story of how, ultimately, through the grace of God and the intercession of his patron Saint and Our Lady, he does not rest condemned. His life is crowned by the birth of a male heir. The frescos show the life of St Francis, set in easily identifiable locations connected with Sassetti's life. St Francis's rejection of worldly goods and money for example, is set in Geneva, the banking capital where Sassetti made all his money. In Ghirlandaio's famous fresco, *The Confirmation of the order of St Francis*, with the portraits of Sassetti and his sons accompanied by Lorenzo de Medici, whose own sons' heads are seen in the front of the picture as they ascend steps lead by their tutor, Angelo Poliziano, the setting is the Piazza della Signoria in Florence. The scene immediately above the altarpiece is unusual in the iconography of the Saint's life. Instead of the usual posthumous miracle, *The Apparition at Arles*, here we have *The Apparition of St Francis resuscitates the Notary's son in Rome*. The central image of the living boy sitting on a bier for a dead child surely refers to the new baby, Teodoro II. The altar piece, in its beautiful gold and blue Florentine frame, the focal point of the chapel, is the adoration of the Shepherds, humble men, not notaries or bankers.

How then do the Sibyls fit in to the iconography of the Chapel? They are the heralds of fallen man's forgiveness and redemption, through the birth of the baby, Jesus Christ: a mirror of the life-experience of Sassetti himself. There are two frescos here: one on the external wall above the arch leading to the chapel, the other on the quadrant vaulting of its ceiling. Their altitude signifies precedence in time and the dimension of Eternity: the element of prophecy. They are above the events recorded in the chapel itself, and their overarching position signifies the overarching scheme of God's Divine Plan, into which the particular events and lives, recorded in the chapel, fit.

Florence: fresco above the Sassetti Chapel: *The Tiburtine Sibyl appears to Augustus*: Ghirlandaio



The paintings show the decline in intellectual engagement with the identities of the individual Sibyls and their oracles. On the chapel's façade, above the glazed terracotta family coat of arms, is Ghirlandaio's fresco of the Tiburtine Sibyl [see picture opposite] announcing the coming of Christ to Augustus who was reputed to be the founder of Florence. In fact, what is actually shown is a numinous golden nimbus. Fully realised figures of the Sibyls are in the quadrants of the ceiling. [see picture opposite] They are however, portrayed as attractive young women, conventionally beautiful, as in the conventional image of the Mother or God as a very beautiful young woman, in the altar-piece. The Sibyls here emphasise the feminine, with its associations of grace, tenderness, forgiveness and young life and birth. These Sibyls however, have no attributes and are wholly unconnected with what is known of the Sibylline Classical origins. They are not even named.

Visual Rhetoric: The Sibyls float on Clouds with a golden disk or sunburst behind them to indicate the appearance of a Holy announcement, without giving these persons a halo.

Florence: the Sassetti Chapel: the Sibyls in the vault





Florence: the Sassetti Chapel: Sibyl 1

TEXT

The Sibyls are numbered clockwise, starting from the one nearest to the back wall of the chapel.

SIBYL 1: [See picture opposite]

ULTIMA AUTEM ETATE³³⁷

But in the last Age

This might be a loose paraphrase of the first line of Virgil's *Eclogue IV*, the Messianic Eclogue. However, this seems odd, since the poem would be so revered in Humanist circles at this time as to make it more likely that the opening words would be written accurately. However, in the light of the inscription carried by the third Sibyl, this does seem to be an allusion to Virgil. If it were to be that Eclogue, the canonical identity of the Sibyl would be the Cumaean.

In late Latin, the words *ultima autem etate* might bear a secondary meaning. We may have here an example of Humanist wit, in that the words have ambiguity and may refer to Sassetti's own circumstances. This is an Indian summer in his life.

³³⁷ Surely an Italian Latin speaker's spelling of *Aetate*.



Florence: the Sassetti Chapel: Sibyl 2

SIBYL 2:

INVISIBILE VERBUM PALPABITUR GERMINABIT

The invisible Word will be made palpable flesh and he will grow...

This is almost exactly the beginning of the canonical text for the **SIBILLA AGRIPPA**,

‘Invisibile verbum palpabitur, / et germinabit ut radix...’

The invisible word will be made palpable flesh and though he will spring as from the root...

The fact that the final word is *germinabit* indicates that it is the oracle of the Agrippa, not the Persica, whose oracle also contains the phrase, *invisibile verbum palpabitur*: [See picture opposite]

The Revello manuscript renders the whole oracle thus:

Sibilla Agrippa: Invisibile verbum palpabitur, / et germinabit ut radix, siccabitur ut folium / et non apparebit venustas eius. / Circumdabitur alvus maternus et flebit Deus letitia sempiterna, / et ab hominibus conculcabitur. / Nascetur ex matre ut Deus et conversabitur ut peccator.

Sibilla Persica: Ecce bestia conculcaberis et gignetur dominus in orbem terrarum. / Et gremium virginis erit salus gentium et pedes eius in valitudine hominum. **Invisibile verbum palpabitur.**



Florence: the Sassetti Chapel: Sibyl 3

SIBYL 3:

HEC TESTE VIRGIL MAGNUS

The great Virgil testifies to this. [See picture opposite]

This is not an oracle but rather an inaccurate attribution of source. It is clear from this that the text carried by the Sibyls is meant to be read, not as separate oracles but as one continuous sentence.



Florence: the Sassetti Chapel: Sibyl 4

SIBYL 4:

NO TEXT ON THE SCROLL

We see the Sibyl writing on a scroll on her knee, but we do not see what she writes.

The designer here has some knowledge of the legend of Augustus and the Tiburtine, and knows of Virgil's Messianic *Eclogue*, and its connection with the Sibyl of Cumae but no serious work has been done on the textual content, or acquainting himself accurately with sources. The second quotation, '*Invisibile Verbum ...*' is not from Virgil. [See picture opposite]

If the Sibyls are, as seems most likely, to be read in a clockwise manner, starting from the one placed above the altar, the oracles make continuous sense. That is, there is one oracle, of insecure and inaccurate origin distributed amongst the four women. This really seems to be a somewhat perfunctory provision of right-sounding text, simply because Sibyls required it as part of the visual mode.

Rome: Santa Maria sopra Minerva: the Carafa Chapel: general view of the ceiling vault



1500 ROME: SANTA MARIA SOPRA MINERVA

The Carafa Chapel

The Sibyls are in the quadrants of the ceiling of the Carafa Chapel, at the end of the right transept. It is dedicated to St Thomas Aquinas and built as a memorial to Cardinal Olivieri Carafa. It is one of the great artistic treasures of Rome. The main frescos are by Filippino Lippi and were painted in 1489. However, the ceiling was not painted until 1500 by Raffaellino del Garbo. The four Sibyls are: 'Tibur', 'Delphi', 'Cuma', and 'Hellespont'.

[See picture opposite]

Rome: Santa Maria sopra Minerva: the Carafa Chapel: Sibylla Tiburtina



TEXT

This group demonstrates that in 1500 in Rome there was no deviation from the canonical text for these Sibyls.³³⁸

SIBYLLA TIBURTINA

NASCET(UR) CHRISTUS IN BETALEM.

Christ will be born in Bethlehem.

This is the canonical oracle for the Sibylla Tiburtina. [See picture opposite]

³³⁸ Where there are lacunae, I have put conjectural letters in brackets. I have marked places where the lettering is indecipherably deteriorated with slash marks.

Rome: Santa Maria sopra Minerva: the Carafa Chapel: Sibylla Helespontica



SIBYLLA HELESPONTICA

IESUS CHRISTUS NASCETUR DE CASTA.

Jesus Christ will be born of the Pure One.

There are two other scrolls in the picture, held by two figures accompanying the Sibyl. These are inscribed with further text additional to the canonical oracle inscribed in the topmost scroll, held by the Sibyl herself. This additional text is original; it does not appear elsewhere.

Left-hand scroll:

IESUS CHRISTUS DEI FILIUS SERVATUR.

Jesus Christ, Son of God, will serve (be a servant).

Right-hand scroll:

OMINA UNO /LACT (N)UNC ////////// NETTARIS //UNT.

I am not secure about this reading as it is very much affected by damp. . [See picture opposite]

The initial oracle is the canonical oracle for the Sibylla Hellespontica.

Rome: Santa Maria sopra Minerva: the Carafa Chapel: Sibylla Cumana



SIBYLLA CUMANA

IAM NOVA PROGENIES (EX IS MISSING) CELO DIMITTITUR ALTO.

This is the fourth line of Virgil's *Eclogue*. Though not the first line, it is part of the canonical oracle for this Sibyl:

Iam nova progenies e celo dimittitur alto:

Now a new progeny descends from high Heaven.

[See picture opposite]

Rome: Santa Maria sopra Minerva: the Carafa Chapel: Sibylla Delphica



SIBYLLA DELPHICA

PROPHETA EX VIRGINI NASCETUR.

He will be born a prophet from a Virgin.

This is a paraphrase of the canonical text, close to the original longer quotation:

Nascetur propheta absque matris coytu ex virgine eius. (Revello MS.)

He will be born a prophet from a mother conceiving without coitus, from a virgin.

[See picture opposite]

Spello: Pinturicchio: vault in Santa Maria Maggiore.



1501 SPELLO: SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE

Pinturicchio. Four Sibyls: Erythraea; Europa; Tiburtina; Samia.

This was the last important work by Pinturicchio, in his sojourn in Umbria.³³⁹ The frescos were finished in 1501, as a painted plaque on a pillar records. The theme of the Chapel is the childhood of Christ, and the Sibyls surmount it, painted in the quadrants of the ceiling vaults. [See pictures opposite].³⁴⁰

Costume

The Sibyls are throned. It may be that the enthronement of the Sibyls owes something to the Baldini engravings but this is very doubtful. Pinturicchio's Sibyls are always beautiful slim young women, dressed in the height of Italian contemporary fashion. They have little or no reference to Classical or other models.

³³⁹ See Don Luigi Pomponi, 'La Cappella Baglioni di Spello: il Capolavoro di Bernardino di Betto, detto il Pinturicchio', *Perugia*, 5 [n. d.] 1-7. See also the drawing recording the text in a better state of preservation in the same article.

³⁴⁰ Coloured general view from Luchinat, Cristina Acidini, *Pinturicchio* (Firenze: Scala, 1999), p 47.

Spello: Pinturicchio: Sibilla Eritrea



TEXT

In each quadrant the text is written on two tabernacles on either side of the Sibyl. All the oracles are taken from the canonical text for these particular Sibyls. Where text is now decayed on the painting, I am relying on the record preserved by Don Luigi Pomponi.³⁴¹

SIBILLA ERITREA:

Left-hand tabernacle:

**DE EXCELSO CELORUM HABITACULO PROSPEXIT DEUS HUMILES
SUOS ET NASCETUR**

Right-hand tabernacle:

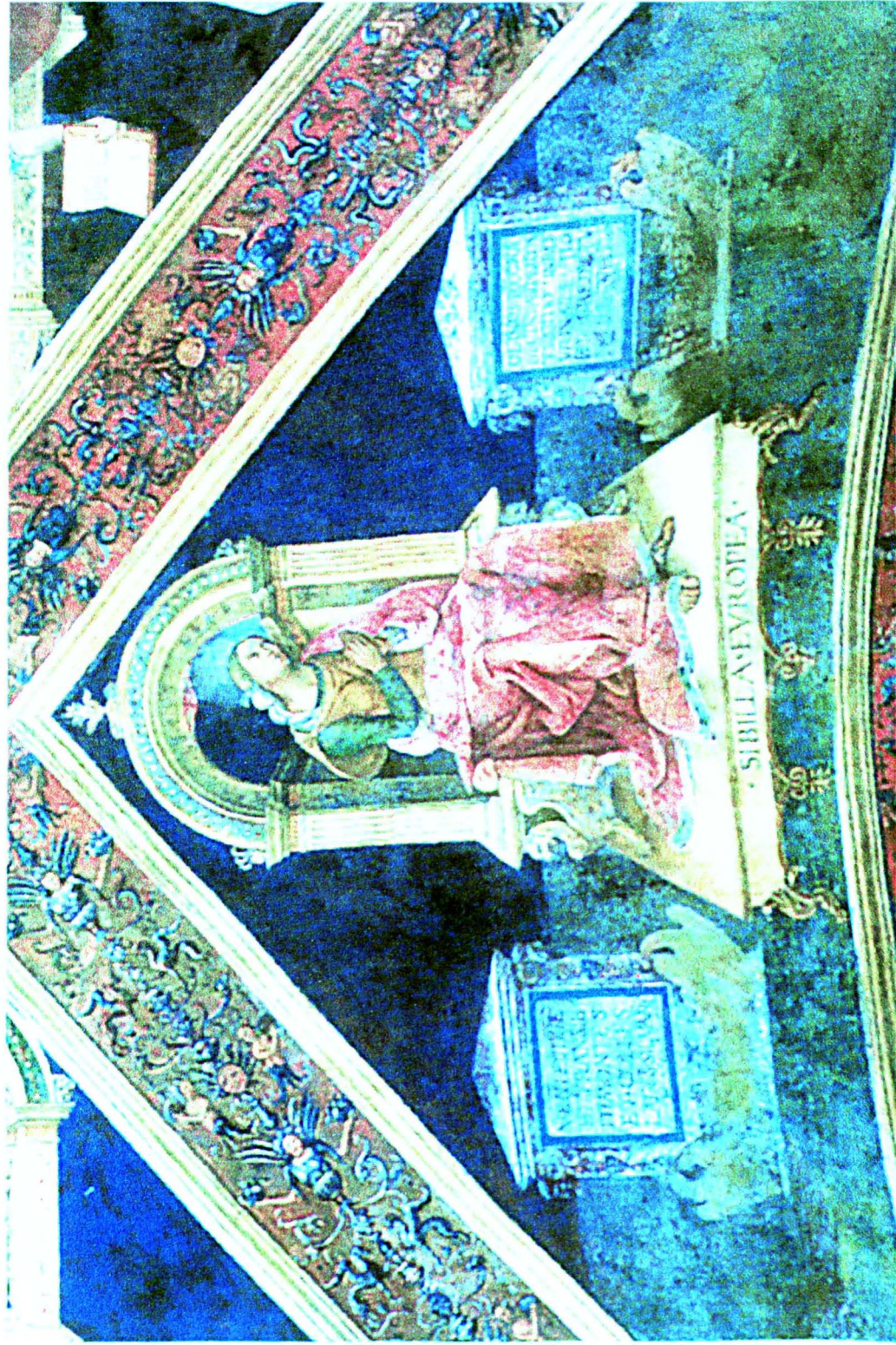
**IN DIEBUS NOVISSIMIS DE VIRGINE HEBREA FILIUS IN CUNABULIS
TERRE.**

*From the high habitation of Heaven, God has looked down on his humble
(servants) and a son shall be born in these latest days of a Hebrew Virgin in the
cradle of the Earth.*

[See picture opposite]

³⁴¹ See Pomponi, pp.2-7.

Spello: Pinturicchio: Sibilla Europea



SIBILLA EUROPEA:

Left-hand tabernacle:

VENIET ILLE ET TRANSIBIT MONTES ET COLLES LATTICES SILVARUM

Right-hand tabernacle:

**OLIMPI REGNABIT IN PAUPERTATE ET DOMINABITUR IN SILENTIO ET
EGREDIETUR DIERUM VENTER VIRGINIS.**

He will come and will cross valleys, mountains and forested Olympian heights.

*He will reign in poverty and will himself be governed remaining silent, being
born of a virgin's womb.*

This is the canonical utterance of the Sibilla Europa, save that the word *venter* is substituted for *utero* meaning 'womb'. [See picture opposite]

Spello: Pinturicchio: Sibilla Tiburtina



SIBILLA TIBURTINA:

Left-hand tabernacle:

**NASCETUR CHRISTUS IN BETHELEM: ET ANNUNCIABITUR IN
NAZARETH REGENIE TAURO**

Right-hand-tabernacle:

**FUNDATORE QUIETIS. O FELIX ILLA MATER CUIUS UBERA ILLUM
LACTABUNT.**

*Christ shall be born in Bethlehem and he shall be announced in Nazareth,
Taurus reigning, founder of rest. Oh happy mother whose breast shall suckle
him.*

[See picture opposite]

Spello: Pinturicchio: Sibilla Samia



SIBILLA SAMIA:

Left-hand tabernacle:

**ECCE VENIET DIVES ET NASCETUR DE PAUPERCUA, ET BESTIE
TERRARUM**

Right-hand tabernacle:

ADORABUNT EUM, ET DICENT: LAUDATE EUM IN ASTRIS CELORUM.

*Behold, he who is rich will come to be born of a poor woman, and the wild
beasts of the lands of the earth shall adore him and say, 'Praise him to the
starry Heavens'.*

[See picture opposite]

[See over for diagram of the four Sibyls and their oracles.]



Rome: Santa Maria del Popolo: The Sacristy behind the High Altar: Pinturicchio

1509-10 ROME: SANTA MARIA DEL POPOLO

Pinturicchio. Four Sibyls: Erithea, Persica, Cimeria and Delphica.

These are on the ceiling of the Choir, directly behind the High Altar. Entrance is through either of the curtained doors to the right and left of that altar. [See picture opposite]

This vault is one of the last works of Pinturicchio, commissioned by his patron, Pope Julius II, Giuliano della Rovere, for the church that was his family mausoleum. Here, Pinturicchio's sense of the grace and beauty of young women is undiminished. These Sibyls are lovely women, with no relation to their Classical antecedents. They are not holy hags but attractive young maidens lounging on couches (because of the shape of the space imposed by the vault). They are more reminiscent of odalisques than oracles.

TEXT

This late fresco appears to mark a falling away from a strict respect for textual orthodoxy established in the genre. However, I think the greatest caution should be exercised before coming to that conclusion too easily on the basis of what is visible today.

The text of these Sibyls at Santa Maria del Populo is wildly heterodox. When it does take its origin from canonical text, it is at times ill-spelled and thus the Latin is changed in meaning. It is as though the writer was staggeringly careless, had poor sight or a badly written source manuscript.

The Sibilla Cimeria's oracle is completely heterodox. It is absent from all other frescos and the manuscripts I have been able to see. In the light of knowledge so far available, it gives the impression of having been invented to fill the space without reference to the tradition. The oracle given to the Sibilla Delphica is actually taken from the last words of the Persica in the canonical source text. The Persica on this ceiling uses earlier words from the same quotation although they are incorrectly written here, radically altering the grammar and meaning.

Rome: Santa Maria del Popolo: Pinturicchio



Sibilla Erithea



Sibilla Persica

Further apparent carelessness is displayed in the writer's execution of his task. The sign writer has not bothered to take into account the space available for the quotation and therefore the size and placing of the letters. The last letter of the Erithea's oracle is painted on the frame of the lettering space. In the Sibilla Cimeria's oracle, the last word does not fit into the carefully painted framed space and is therefore joined onto the previous word with no defining space to mark its beginning. Finding that he still cannot fit it into the space, the scribe has then continued to write it, transgressing the edge of the space reserved for text and nonchalantly continuing over the rest of the picture.

This suggests to me that the writing may not be original. Surely, had such an unsatisfactory job been made of the work at the time of painting, Pinturicchio himself, if none other, would surely have objected roundly to the ruination of his work. However, the lettering may have been delayed, and not painted till after his death, in 1513.

The letters were in pale gold leaf, not the usual strong and sticky black.³⁴² It is also possible that what we see here is a highly unsuccessful attempt at restoration.

SIBILLA ERITHEA:

IN ULTIMA ETATE HUMANABITUR DEUS³⁴³

In the last period of time God will become human.

[See picture opposite] The last 's' is not very visible on the picture since the text strays out of the frame and the light coloured 's' is placed on the frame of the text-space. The quotation is an inaccurate rendering of the source text, the heterodox Erythraean oracle from the Revello Manuscript:

³⁴²At some time, an enthusiast, perhaps a priest in charge, without knowledge of the source texts, has made guesses at what the words were, and painted them over the picture.

³⁴³*Humanabitur* is not a Classical Latin verb. There is no such verb as 'Humanare', it is a neologism. The Renaissance did develop Latin and create new words but this creation of a verb from a noun is particularly unpleasing and lacks the grace of the properly educated Humanist.



Sibilla Cimeria



Sibilla Delphica

In ultima etate humiliabitur Deus

In the last period of time God will be humbled.

SIBILLA PERSICA:

GERMEN VIRGINIS ERIT SALUS GENTIUM

The seed of the Virgin will be the salvation of mankind.

This again is a mistaken rendering of the original source, which reads:

Gremium Virginis erit salus gentium.

The lap of a virgin will be the salvation of mankind.

SIBILLA CIMERIA:

DEI FILIUS IN CARNE VENIET UT IUDICET ORBE

The Son of God will come in flesh to judge the world.

The lack of division in the last word because of the unsuccessful attempt to squeeze it into the frame provided has already been noted. There is a mistaken insertion of a 'T'. It should read, '*iudice orbe*'. As previously noted, there is an apparent invention of text (this not appearing anywhere else in art or manuscript). [See picture opposite]

SIBILLA DELPHICA:

INVISIBILE VERBUM PALPABITUR

The Invisible Word is made palpable.

These words are found in the canonical text, but not in the mouth of the Delphica. This is a later part of the complete oracle of the Sibilla Persica than that written next to her picture on this ceiling.

Rome: Santa Maria della Pace: Raphael



1514: ROME: S. MARIA DELLA PACE

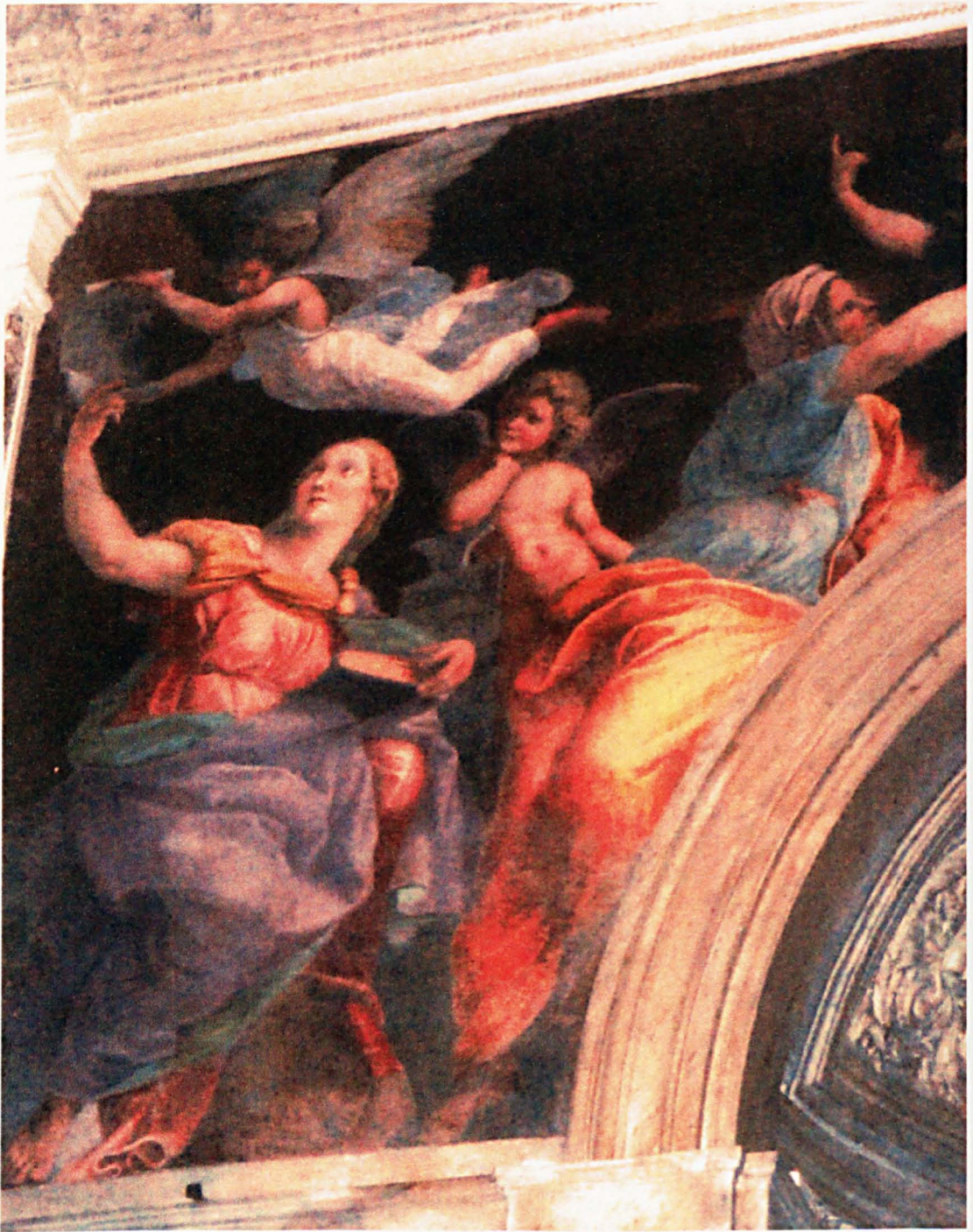
First chapel on the right of the nave. Raphael. Four Sibyls: Cumana, Perisica, Phrygia, Tiburtina. [See picture opposite]

These are High Renaissance Sibyls and as such, strictly out of the scope of this study. They are included to trace the history of textual quotation in this genre to its completion, and to complete the sub-group of quartets of Sibyls, of which two others are also in Rome. These Sibyls do not really fit the genre, however. This is a single picture painted above a chapel. The early renaissance quartets are all in the quadrants of roof vaulting where their special position is a metaphor for the over arching providence of God and its expression in prophetic words, standing above the events of human history. Here we have a single picture in which the four Sibyls are painted on the flat space above the chapel arch.

TEXT

As can be seen from the photographs, there is one Latin inscription and there are four Greek oracles. This in itself is a commentary on the progress of Renaissance linguistic skill in the Western Church by 1514. Georgina Masson names these as the 'Cuma, Persia, Phrygia and Tibur', but does not say on what basis she identifies them thus.³⁴⁴ They are not named on the painting.

³⁴⁴ Masson, p. 189.



Rome: SM della Pace: left portion of the fresco

There are four Greek inscriptions on scrolls or tablets. The advent of Greek in a fresco reflects the wider understanding of that language in high-Renaissance Italy by 1514. [See pictures opposite and following]

Rome: SM della Pace: central section of the fresco





Rome: SM della Pace: Raphael: right side of fresco

There is Greek text on the scroll held by the flying angel at the top right of the fresco.³⁴⁵ [See picture opposite]

The Latin oracle is on a scroll next to the right-hand Sibyl:

IAM NOV PROGEN

This is an abbreviated version of part of the fourth line of Virgil's Messianic *Eclogue*, and as such is the canonical utterance of the Cumaean Sibyl. It announces that a new age has begun.³⁴⁶ It has indeed. This painting marks the departure of reverence for the Latin canonical text in the Sibyl Cycle genre, and as such the end of the story of its development, and the initial development of the genre in Italy.

³⁴⁵ All other scrolls and tablets in these frescos are inscribed in Greek, apart from the last, which is in Latin

³⁴⁶ The future tense is missing.

**PART III (CONTINUED): THE SIBYL CYCLES
OF CENTRAL AND NORTHERN ITALYSECTION**

**SECTION II: THE SIBYL CYCLES AFTER THE
ADVENT OF THE PRINTED IMAGE**

**CHAPTER VII: A CLOSE STUDY OF THE
SIBYLS AT SIENA**

CHAPTER VII: A CLOSE STUDY OF THE SIBYLS AT SIENA

Constructed 1481-2

In a dissertation of this scale, it is not possible to give a detailed account of the history and provenance of every cycle in the north of Italy, even though all are included. The cycle at Siena however, is arguably the most significant of the genre, since its quality and prominence gave it fame at the time of its construction and thereafter, cycles of architectural significance appeared in other European countries. It is therefore justifiable to devote space to a more detailed account of the cycle at Siena, since in some ways it marks the notable high-point in the history of what, in the light of this study, can be seen as a significant genre in Northern Italian *quattrocento* art. Much of what is said here, especially concerning the methods of design and construction is similar to processes employed in other sites.

There are four main topics that need to be addressed in a close study of this nature:

1. The Material History

- a) The order of construction of the whole pictorial scheme at Siena and the pattern of iconographic themes into which context the Sibyls were placed. Were the Sibyls continuing a pre-existing thematic plan, or were they reflecting the present interests of the presiding Rector?
- b) The social setting: the human authority structures of the Cathedral; the Initiating Officials; Aringhieri, who was the Rector; the artists and artisans and their payment.

2. The Problem of 'Restoration

The question of the present day appearance of the Sibyls and past restoration. Does the floor today, after several 'restorations' down the centuries, look like the 1480s original? When were the restorations? How sure can we be that the present floor looks like the original?

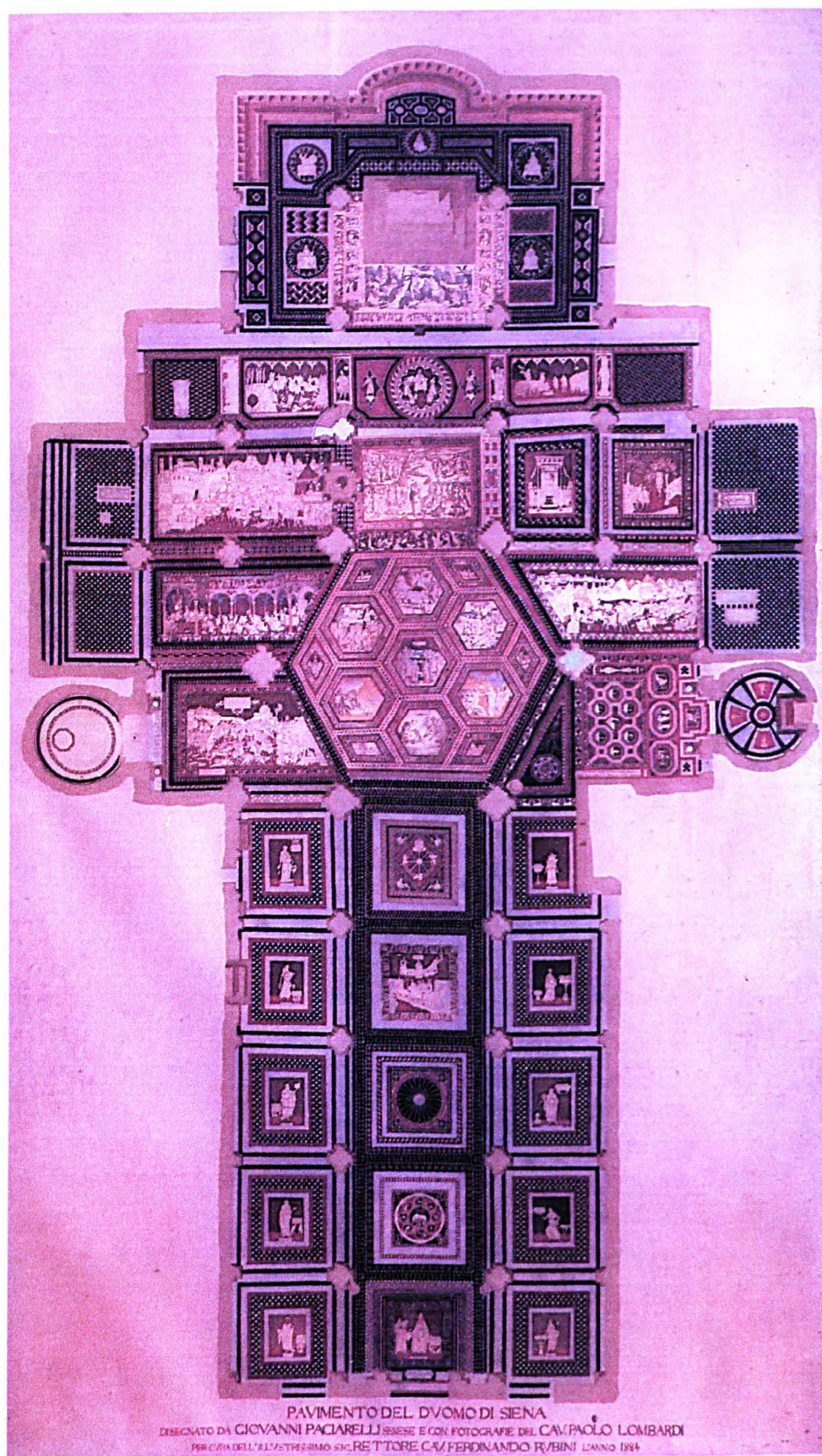
3. The Question of the Pattern and Order of the Sibyls:

The order in which the Sibyls are arranged on the floor and its iconographic significance.

4. Description of the Floor as it now Appears:

There are two sections:

- a) The appearance of the Sibyls: their attributes and costumes.
- b) The names, labels and oracles of the Sibyls.



Siena: Whole Floor

1: THE MATERIAL HISTORY

a) THE ORDER OF CONSTRUCTION OF THE PICTORIAL FLOOR AND THE ICONOGRAPHIC SCHEME

The central question in relation to this topic is whether or not there was, as Ohley opines, a clear thematic principle at work throughout the whole history of the development of the pictorial floor.³⁴⁷ It is here that I depart from Ohley's scholarly and extensive account of the floor and its symbolism. He sees it as a thematic unity, chronicling the History of Salvation. I doubt that there was such a single overall plan for the whole of the floor from the inception of wheel patterns in the nave in 1372 till Beccafumi's *Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac* in 1547. I think there is a unity, but it evolved. Later additions were in dialogue with earlier elements and added themes such as the involvement of children and women in war that had not occurred before. I think the iconography was more fortuitous than Ohley suggests, and that its development was generic, passing from one visual idea to another. At different periods, and under different Rectors, there were varying thematic principles governing the choice of subjects. In the end, as Ohley indicates, a history of salvation is achieved. [See pictorial plan of the floor opposite.]

The pictorial floor started with a primary visual pattern, that of the wheel enclosed in a square panel, placed up the centre of the nave as a very satisfying repeated architectural shape. The first of these to have pictorial rather than simply patterned content was the first version of the *Wheel of Fortune* laid down in 1372. The last picture placed on the floor by Aringhieri in 1505, the *Island Allegory*, is a kind of commentary on the role of Fortune in the moral life. In the 1505 picture, Fortune, personified as a naked woman, her right foot on an

³⁴⁷Friedrich Ohly, *Schriften zur mittelalterlichen Bedeutungsforschung*, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, [Abt. Verl.], 1977). A clear and detailed account of the dates of each pictorial panel and the order in which they were laid down and the artists concerned, with an accompanying plan of the Cathedral will be found in Appendix 10. The purpose here is to examine thematic and iconographic coherence. This section should be read with reference to Appendix 10.



The last picture placed on the floor by Aringhieri in 1505, the *Island Allegory*

unstable globe, has brought about the wreck of the boat, a seeming disaster. This is turned to moral and spiritual triumph through individual disciplined effort, rightly directed, through which wisdom is gained at the summit of a craggy hill. Aringhieri placed this at the head of the nave as a last picture, perhaps as counterbalance and comment on the first *Wheel of Fortune* picture, where, in 1372, fortune was seen as controlling and arbitrary, independent of human will. [See picture opposite.]

After the first *Wheel of Fortune*, two other wheel pictures followed in the 1370s: *The Confederate Cities* and *The Imperial Eagle*. In the first six years of the *quattrocento* personifications of Virtues: Temperance, Prudence, Piety and Justice, all framed by wheels, were laid down in the chancel. After that, the idea of the single individual as the subject of a pictorial panel without the addition of a wheel pattern as a frame was adopted. After the women in the wheels, single portraits of male heroes of the Old Testament were laid at the entrance to the chancel: David, Goliath, Judas Maccabeus, Samson, Moses and Joshua. These Herculean figures end with a portrait of the Emperor Sigismund enthroned. This was made in 1434. In my view, it is a shameless piece of flattery and fortuitous state-craft, done in relation to his visit to Siena, and no complex allegory of the relation of the Christian monarch to the history of Salvation. After such afflatus, the addition of further single biblical figures might seem embarrassing, if not sacrilegious. No further works were done for thirteen years. It was then that the iconography of the floor took a new turn altogether, quite different from single wheel patterns or single figures. The element of narrative was introduced by the Rector in 1447, Giovanni Borghese, and with it a consistent theme quite different from the portrayal of heroes: the theme was the fate of women and children, sons and daughters often caught up in warfare. This reflects the Sienese experience of the time, as a small state, struggling to maintain a measure of independence and caught in the Titanic struggles between Emperor and Pope for the domination of Italy. This theme starts at the right of the crossing with the story of Absalom, the wayward, disloyal, son, destroyed in war. It is balanced by the portrait of the heroic daughter, Judith, triumphing in war, placed in exactly the opposite location on the left of the crossing in 1473. After this, Aringhieri, the

retired soldier, clearly found this innovation moving and satisfactory. He was to continue the narrative panels on the theme of women and children, with children sacrificed by soldiers, *Jephtha's Daughter* and the *Massacre of the Innocents*, and single portraits of prophet figures, but this time all of them women: the Sibyls.

Just after the first narrative panel was placed on the floor at the instigation of Borghese, in 1448, two flasks were placed on the external platform of the East façade, directly outside the doors to the aisles. On the right was a jar marked MEL, honey, on the left a jar marked, FEL, gall. Very soon these were to be worn away, as all visitors to the Cathedral normally entered by these doors, not the great West door, but I believe they marked a specific intention as to the symbolism and kind of topic to be portrayed on the opposing left and right aisles and seen by those who chose which door to use as entrance. I believe Aringhieri's intention was to remain faithful to that idea when laying down the pictorial panels of the aisles.

It is in the context of the significance and role of women and children, as heroines, sages and sacrificial Victims, that the Sibyl Cycle in the left and right aisles of the nave takes its place.

After Aringhieri's term of office and his last *Island* panel, all that remained in terms of major works was to finish the blank spaces in the crossings and transepts. It is likely that by the time the first of these was set in train, Aringhieri had died, since there is a break with the uniting theme of women and children. The masculine theme of the great Biblical sagas of Elijah and Moses is entered upon in the 1520s. These fill the space left in the southeast corner of the right transept and the apron shape behind the main altar in the crossing below the cupola. When the altar was removed to the East wall in 1532 the remaining space was left unsatisfactorily filled till the rest of the hexagonal shape was very successfully completed with the remaining episodes of the life of Elijah in 1878.

The last of the significant Renaissance designs, completing the pictorial floor, returned to the central theme of suffering children sacrificed. This was the *Story of Abraham's*

Sacrifice of Isaac. It was the last work of Beccafumi, and was completed on February 25th. 1547 (Sienese dating, 1546).

There were then, four main controlling themes in the history of the floor. The first from 1372-1406 was primarily visual. It consisted of the wheel patterns down the centre of the nave and in the chancel. These had some subsidiary allegorical or symbolic significance, latterly with single female figures representing the Virtues. The second series from 1423-1434 consisted of pictures where the wheel motif was discarded and single, male, Heroic or Herculean figures from the Old Testament were depicted. The third phase from 1447-1505 introduced interaction between characters. This was the period of Aringhieri's Rectorship and influence. It was the period of the great dramatic narratives and the Sibyl Cycle, covering half the floor of the cathedral. The last period (other than the nineteenth-century restoration and completion of themes) ran from 1518-1531, the period of the representation of Old Testament hero sagas. The last Renaissance picture, 1544-46, immediately after the sagas, was *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, a return to the theme of children.

I do not then, conclude that the whole floor has a single controlling thematic motif, even be it as large and all encompassing as the History of Salvation. Even so, the whole great work manages to be a truly impressive aesthetic unity. The four related themes do all celebrate the contribution of particular individuals, symbolic or historic, to the history of the Faith, and as such a celebration of the individual, together constitute a unique and major work of Renaissance art.³⁴⁸

b) THE SOCIAL SETTING: THE HUMAN AUTHORITY STRUCTURES OF THE CATHEDRAL

To understand how the Cathedral administration functioned, it is helpful to bear in mind the emotional resonance and meaning of the community in the Italian hill town or city,

³⁴⁸ The precise dates and a plan of the floor, making clear the sequence of construction, is to be found in Appendix 10.

the sense of genuine civic pride, which lent a dignity to all citizens who could claim to belong to it. The status of the City in comparison with other cities enhanced or debased the status of the individual. This engendered a communal will to maintain and enhance the City's status. This resulted in a strong communal desire for public works of beauty and utility.

The Authority Structure in the Cathedral and the Sequence of Events in the Production of the Floor

The authority structure in the cathedral was the product and mirror of the state, the Commune. Highest authority, the power to get things done, was held by the Rector, Master of Works or *Operaio*, as he was variously called. He was however, not autonomous. His considerable powers were in balance and occasionally in tension with the committee of prominent citizens of relevant qualification and experience also having authority in the administration of the Cathedral.

The authority structure was as follows:

1: The Rector

This was probably the highest office in the City. To this man the City delegated the responsibility for the Cathedral, its income and the power of spending it. He was also responsible for instigating the necessary engineering works to provide and maintain a sufficient supply of clean water and adequate drainage to maintain public health. In addition he was responsible for the major civic secular buildings, the Palazzo Pubblico and the Loggia della Mercanza. He was thus responsible for the material aspects of the spiritual and physical health of the Commune. He was responsible for initiating building schemes, employing master masons and artists to provide plans, and then employing the contractors, artisans and labourers who did the building work. The Master of Works would characteristically be a merchant or cleric of sophisticated intelligence and education and with experience of running a large-scale organisation although he could be, like Jacopo della Quercia, an artist of high reputation and standing. An imaginative and strong-minded Master of Works could have an

enormous impact on the physical environment. He was a communal appointee, paid a very high annual salary. Jacopo della Quercia, appointed in 1453 was paid one hundred gold florins a year for his life and his contract also stipulated that his widow would receive the annual interest from one hundred florins as pension.³⁴⁹ The Rector responsible for the Sibyl Cycle, and indeed the completion of the whole Cathedral floor was Alberto Aringhieri, Knight of Rhodes, that is, Knight of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, retired in his later years to his native Siena. He was a distinguished soldier and diplomat, steering his native city away from disastrous internal riot and war with Florence, but his contribution to the arts in Siena is unparalleled. The topics on the floor, women and children, eastern religion including Hermes Trismegistus and the Sibyls, reflect the foreign experience, privations and benefits of belonging to the celibate Order. It was he who was responsible for initiating the works to the Cathedral floor that completed it and made it the startling and beautiful work it now is.

2: The Cathedral Board of Works

The Rector or Master of Works was a City official and absolute power was foreign to the ideal of corporate and communal responsibility. He was answerable to, and to an extent controlled by, the Board of Works. A powerful and visionary Master could however inspire the Board of Works and gain its support. This Board consisted of between four and six men of whom at least one was normally a Canon of the Cathedral and others would be practising artists. The board had its own house next to the Cathedral and premises where artists could work. One man would act as Treasurer, and there would also be a Notary or Clerk of Works. The Board was collectively responsible for the fiscal affairs of the Cathedral: keeping the accounts, collecting revenue, drawing up contracts and fixing wage levels.³⁵⁰ The very detailed account book, the *Bicherna*, drawn up each year, with a front cover painted by an

³⁴⁹ See Judith Hook, *Siena, a City and its History* (London: Hamish Hamilton, [n.d.]), p. 57.

³⁵⁰ See Hook, p. 58.

artist of standing, is the most helpful archival document in discovering the history of the floor.

3: Sub-committees of expert advisors

Larger Specialist Sub-Committees of citizens who had particular relevant expertise in relation to an individual project were often formed. For example, the Committee created in 1398 to decide on the design of the *testiere* of the choir stalls was composed of fifteen prominent artisans, including six painters, four woodcarvers, one stonemason and a goldsmith.

4: The Capomaestro or Master Mason

Possibly non-literate or non-Latinist.

5: Artists of standing, who submitted designs

Possibly non-literate or non-Latinist.

6: Lesser artists

Might make scale cartoons (possibly non-literate or non-Latinist).

7: Skilled artisans

Cut and placed the marble pictures in position (probably non-literate or non-Latinist).

8: Specialists in Lettering or Sign Writers

Artists or artisans who were vernacular-literate but apparently not Latin-literate, who could cut the lettering into the spaces left for it in the otherwise completed pavement pictures. Frequently, word boundaries are transgressed in the Latin text on the floor, implying non-comprehension on the part of the stonecutter.

9: Workmen

Prepared and transported the marble tesserae or flat polished slabs (probably non-literate).

This chain of command goes far to explain textual variations and errors and the seeming sequential error in the placing of the pictures on the floor: a not uncommon Renaissance occurrence.

THE PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTING THE FLOOR FROM DESIGN TO EXECUTION

Carli makes clear that he thinks that a major artist such as Stefano di Giovanni, ‘Sassetta’, would simply make a design for a floor panel.³⁵¹ Then, a lesser artist, such as Paolo di Martino, might be employed to translate the details of the design onto several sheets to make it the right scale and size to serve as a template for the artisans who would then cut the design into the marble of the floor.

This model of the sequence of events in the construction of parts of the floor springs from the accounts for the floor in 1426. As late as the 16 November, i.e. at the end of the year, Sassetta was paid for the design. The accounts for 1426 also state that there is a payment to a paper-maker for having furnished ‘*dieci quaderni*’, fifty sheets of paper, ‘*fogli reagli*’, to ‘*Paulo nostro per la disegniatura de la storia di Giosuè*,’ ‘to our Paul for the design of the story of Joshua.’ (Paolo di Martino was in the full-time employ of the Duomo.) This large amount of paper supports the idea that it was Martino’s role to make a transfer of Sassetta’s design for the ‘*spianatori*’, the artisans who realised the designs and made the level incised marble floor.

ALBERTO ARINGHERI, KNIGHT OF RHODES, RECTOR OF SIENA CATHEDRAL, INSTIGATOR OF THE SIBYL CYCLE

The Grand Order of the Knights of Malta, formerly known as the Knights of Rhodes, has not so far found it possible to grant access to its archives, which must be the primary source for research into the life and personality of Aringhieri. The *Dizionario Biografiche degli Italiani* gives a single entry under the family name, but it is evidently about a less

³⁵¹ Enzo Carli, *Il Duomo di Siena* (Genova: Sagep Editrice, 1979), pp. 146-7.

distinguished relative belonging to the previous generation. The omission of Alberto Aringhieri is indeed odd, since not only was he a distinguished soldier and diplomat, steering his native city away from disastrous internal riot and war with Florence, but his contribution to the arts in Siena is unparalleled. It was he who was responsible for initiating the works to the Cathedral floor that completed it and made it the startling and beautiful work it now is. He was responsible for paving roughly half of the famous pictorial floor as can be seen from the floor plan attached to Appendix 10. This vast area filled with pictorial narrative gave a wholeness and dramatic intensity to the floor as a whole, making it an important work of art where before it had been a conventional Cathedral floor with some pictorial curios, portrait panels in the eastern section and some fairly conventional wheel patterns in the nave.

The two obvious sources having failed to provide information, it is necessary to adopt alternative strategies to assemble at least some information as to the man's life and personality. Some are obvious, some are difficult but not impossible to find. The sources are as follows:

1. **The physical evidence of the two portraits painted by Pinturicchio:** one of the young Aringhieri, clothed in the knightly garb of the order he is about to enter, kneeling as though in the knightly Vigil before his consecration; the other of the older man, having served abroad for many years, probably painted at the point of his return to Siena upon retirement from active service. Understanding the significance of his membership of the Order of the Knights of Rhodes, also known as the Knights of St John, and now as the Knights of Malta, is helpful in understanding the man..
2. **The evidence of the choice of subject and recurrent thematic content** in those panels of the floor laid at his instigation. The choice of subject for artistic works in the Renaissance gives a strong indication of what is important to the patron. In the absence of firmer biographical testimony we must resort to this interpretative exercise to reveal the man's mind and temperament and therefore what the Sibyl Cycle was

PINTURICCHIO: THE TWO PORTRAITS OF ALBERTO ARINGHERI YOUNG AND OLD



intended to convey, read in the context of the rest of the series of works commissioned by him.

3. **References to Alberto Aringhieri found in printed material and manuscripts not directly concerned with himself or the Cathedral.**

The Two Portraits of Aringhieri by Pinturicchio

The Aringhieri family, as well as the Piccoluomini family, was a consistent patron of Pinturicchio. There are three works other than the pictures in the Piccoluomini library to be seen in the cathedral, all commissioned by Aringhieri. There are the two portraits of himself, as a young novice and then as an older man, retired in the frescos in the St John's Baptistry Chapel. [See picture opposite.] There is also the design for the so-called 'Hill of Fortune' picture on the floor at the head of the central aisle of the nave. Aringhieri was no longer Rector when this was commissioned in 1505, but, coming out of retirement, he returned to his work completing the floor, by commissioning this mysterious allegory.

The collocation of the two pictures in the context of the Baptistry is a moving comment on the transience and changes of life in the place where the new-born are first brought into the Church. The first works that Aringhieri commissioned on the floor were in the area immediately at the entrance to the Baptistry in the north transept.³⁵² All his first works in the Cathedral were connected with the Baptistry. There are obvious reasons why a Knight of St John would feel a responsibility to maintain and adorn the Baptist's chapel. There may however, have been more emotional reasons for an involvement with children and helpless infants on the part of this retired soldier. These will be examined in relation to iconographic content.

³⁵² Throughout this dissertation, North, South, West and East are conventional, not actual. That is to say, when describing all churches, I assume the convention that the high altar is due East.

The Knights of Rhodes

The Knights of Rhodes are also called Hospitallers or Hospitalers. From 1309 till 1522 they were called the Order of the Knights of Rhodes. When they were expelled from Rhodes and transferred to Malta, they were called the Sovereign and Military Order of the Knights of Malta. Since 1961 they have been the '*Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta*'. They are, and were, a religious order of Hospitalers, which was founded at Jerusalem in the eleventh century, having its headquarters in Rome.

The Hospitalers were one of the most formidable military orders in the Holy Land. Under Moslem pressure, they retreated first to Cyprus and then, in 1309, they acquired Rhodes. They ruled it as an independent state, minting their own currency and having full sovereignty. The monks were celibate soldiers and hospitallers.³⁵³ For two hundred years, the Knights of Rhodes impeded Muslim shipping on the eastern Mediterranean. By the fifteenth century, the Turks had succeeded the Arabs as the main force of militant Islam. By Aringhieri's time, the monks lived under the Augustinian rule. The power of the organization had grown. It had acquired wealth and lands and combined the task of tending the sick with waging war on Islam.

In the Eastern Mediterranean, Aringhieri would have become aware of Egyptian, Turkish and Greek religion, culture and history. This can be seen in the breadth of reference found in the pictures on the floor of the nave, installed by Aringhieri. The picture immediately inside the great west door is a particularly good illustration of this. It shows three figures in exotic costume. They appear to me to be representations of the Hermes Trismegistus, the Egyptian Seer, believed in the Renaissance to be a contemporary of Abraham, handing books with the sacred laws to a Turk in a characteristic wide turban, and a

³⁵³ It was not till 1522 that Süleyman the Magnificent expelled them from Cyprus and Rhodes. For seven years the wandering Knights were without a base, but in 1530 the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V gave them the Maltese archipelago, whence their current name.

figure in what seems to be a representation of ancient Greek costume.³⁵⁴ The symbolism suggests that both East (represented by the Turk) and West (represented by the Greek) derive their civilization based on Holy Law from Egypt. Hermes Trismegistus is in act of giving them a book with the following words inscribed on its pages: *SUSCIPITE O LICTERAS ET LEGES EGYPTII*.³⁵⁵ The Latin inscription on the tablet supported in the picture by two sphinxes is as follows: *Deus omnium creator secum Deum fecit visibilem et hunc fecit primum et solum quo oblectatus est et valde amavit proprium Filium qui appellatur Sanctum Verbum*.³⁵⁶ This is a quotation from the *Poimander*, a work said to be written by Hermes Trismegistus and understood to be about the liturgy and religion practised in the Egyptian temples. It bears a startling resemblance to the words of God, recorded in the New Testament at the baptism of Jesus by St John, patron of Aringhieri's Order, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' The echo of the text of unimpeachable orthodoxy because it is Biblical, is a way of presenting and justifying a faith that does not exclude the recognition of worth and truth in other religions. So many of the Sibylline Oracles, inscribed below the pictures of Sibyls in the side aisles of the nave do exactly this. They imply a syncretistic approach in one who has had real contact with good men of other faiths and is far more widely traveled and experienced than his fellow citizens. Although the Knights were the scourge of the Moslem traders, they studied the culture of their foes. Educated and civilized men do not generally study other insights than their own with sustained bigotry. Here there is an implied recognition of truths sharing the insights of Christianity.

Hermeticism would have been among the arcane and occult subjects foreign to Siena but encountered in the Eastern Mediterranean at the meeting point of so many civilizations.

³⁵⁴ In fact, the 'Hermetic' writings are probably a palimpsest of late neo-Platonist material from Egypt.

³⁵⁵ 'Accept the letters and laws of Egypt.' (Hermes Trismegistus was said to be the inventor of writing and the first lawgiver.

³⁵⁶ 'God, the Creator of all things, himself made God visible and here he made, first and uniquely, his own Son in whom he delighted and truly loved, whom he called the Holy Word.'

It has however, connections with alchemy and Paracelsus's *Hermetic Medicine*, which Aringhieri, as Hospitaller, would have known. It is also connected to the Hermetic Freemasonry of the Middle Ages.

Aringhieri's arcane intellectual interests and syncretism, demonstrated in his choice of subject on this remarkable floor, were likely to be the product of his personal life, his first-hand experiences of scholarship and faith outside the ambit of Catholic Europe. However, the personal enthusiasms and interests of this individual also gave expression, perhaps fortuitously, to currents of thought in his own culture. This was the growing Humanist exploration of Greek and Eastern texts in the growth of Italian Humanism. Although these interests can be explained in terms of the intellectual soldier's contact with other civilizations and religions abroad, there is no reason to suppose that he had no Humanist education.

We have noted the matrix of middle-eastern culture Greek, Egyptian and Turkish that fed the mind designing the pattern of pictorial representation on the floor of the nave, with its Eastern Hermeticism and Sibylline wisdom. It is of course entirely possible that Aringhieri was familiar with the Western Church's *Rite of the Sibyl* as a child and in the East he would have first-hand experience of the earliest locations of the Sibylline cult and access to libraries in Rhodes containing oriental scholarship. We now turn to the narrative material he chose to place on the floor whose source was more conventional in the context of a Christian Cathedral: the Old Testament, to determine whether this is simply a separate aesthetic and iconographic endeavor or whether it shares thematic concerns with the Eastern arcana.

At the time, the Old Testament, the history of the religious, moral and cultural development of the Jewish nation, was read as a paradigm for both the development of the individual Christian soul, and that of the Christian nation- or City-state. The victorious battles of the Jews against their enemies were seen as an encouragement to the individual Christian and an encouragement in the struggles of Siena against her own enemies. It might have been expected that the retired and much-respected soldier and diplomat, Aringhieri, once made Rector, might use the floor as a triumphalist Chronicle of famous victories,

THE STORY OF ABSALOM



emphasizing the social importance of effective military force, used for righteous causes. This was however, far from the case.

Aringhieri and the Symbolic Content of the Floor

The first narrative picture, the *Story of Absalom*, was made under the Rectorship of Giovanni Borghese in 1447. [See picture opposite.] The concept that the pictures did not have to be single portraits of Biblical personages, Personified Virtues or visiting potentates, but could dramatically reflect the fate of the weak and young in a war, seemed to fire Aringhieri's imagination, in that he continued the paving of the transepts in like manner eliciting a governing theme for the content of the pictures, from Borghese's *Story of Absalom*. The common theme of all the pictures commissioned by Aringhieri which are not derived from Eastern mysticism, and of many that are, is the role and fate of children, sons and daughters, infants and adolescents and also of women.³⁵⁷

We should perhaps not be surprised. The profession of the avowed Christian military man, especially from a Romano Italic culture centered on the family, is surely not without its paradoxes. Virgil's most moving passages are reflections on the effect on families when news of the death of sons in battle, however honourable, is brought to aged parents. This theme could be a reflection of the awful memories of the professional soldier concerning the fate of the weak and defenceless in war, or the yearning of the celibate Italian male for children. It is idle to speculate. What is certain is that almost everything Aringhieri initiates has to do with women and children. There are two major pictures of the period in the transepts laid down before he became Rector: *The Relief of Bethulia by Judith* of 1473 and the *Seven Ages of Man* of 1476.

There is no direct documentary evidence that *The Relief of Bethulia by Judith* was commissioned by Aringhieri, but neither have I seen evidence that it was commissioned by

³⁵⁷ With the exception of the late allegory of *Fortune* and *The Island of Wisdom* of 1505 completing the nave.

anyone else.³⁵⁸ The work immediately before the *Judith* panel however, was done in 1447, when Aringhieri was a young man, almost certainly before he joined the Order and became a soldier.³⁵⁹ The Judith panel starts a whole series of works, the rest of them certainly commissioned by Aringhieri, which furnish the gaps on the floor of the transepts with pictures, and make for a sense of completion. What we see is a pre-planned series of works intended to pave the whole transept area with pictorial panels before moving to the nave to complete the same project. All the rest of these works are instigated and controlled by Aringhieri. It is very unlikely that someone else commissioned the Judith panel, it being the first of these works and having a common theme with the rest.

The *Relief of Bethulia* is very interesting both because it shows the direct influence of Botticelli, a matter discussed in the section directly below, and in that it shows the revenge of the vulnerable *funciulla* Judith on the powerful male who thought to take sexual advantage of her. The heroism of Judith is far more than her extreme physical courage. Her action is selfless in that she is prepared to risk her social standing and reputation. She risks her marriagability and social acceptance, in the Jewish and Italic value system, and presents them as a sacrifice to preserve her nation. The fact that she is presented as heroine not whore is saying something very powerful in both cultures. She *needs* to be thus extremely honoured to compensate for the unspoken tendency, enshrined in the very language, to regard her as potentially polluted, 'spoiled', 'damaged'. Christian soldiers of the great military orders must have seen rape happen, or worse, have themselves participated or been powerless to stop such events. The story of Judith is likely to be the first panel commissioned by the retired soldier. It gives the emotional satisfaction of immediate and personal revenge. The woman herself wreaks revenge and has plotted the whole sequence of events, being in control from

³⁵⁸ He was almost certainly on the Cathedral Board of Works before being elected Rector and thus in a position to suggest and initiate the work, which fits thematically with all his later commissions.

³⁵⁹ See Appendix 10 for the chronology of the floor at Siena, with a full list of pictures and dates.

the outset, instead of being a victim. This is not often the scenario or the outcome, as the soldier, Aringhieri, must have known.

The next panel is the *Seven Ages of Man*, again necessitating the ultimate helplessness of human beings, and a subject that calls for the portrayal of babies and children.

As soon as this was completed, Aringhieri was made Rector and set out on the rest of the works he planned. His first act as Rector was to complete the pictorial floor in the left transept, the part immediately outside the chapel of St John, which is and was also the Baptistry, where babies and children were brought by their mothers. Aringhieri had the baptistry restored and renewed and, as we have seen, had Pinturicchio paint two portraits of himself therein: one as a young, innocent and untried squire, about the age of Judith, idealistic, completing his Vigil on entering the military order, the other as the experienced and grizzled elder statesman, diplomat and ex-soldier. His own personal vision of the Ages of Man, and his vulnerability and decay. As a Knight of St John, he might be expected to aggrandize St John's Chapel. However, it was also the Baptistry; again the concern with mothers and babies is maintained.

The next panel he commissioned was that of the *Massacre of the Innocents* in 1481, on the left transept floor immediately outside the Baptistry. Again the theme emerges. It is a powerful and moving scene of atrocious horror, mothers screaming and fighting to protect infants from armed soldiers quite clearly hopelessly stronger. Babies are butchered by men who should protect. The scene is flying in the face of natural instincts, the stuff of nightmare, perhaps of Aringhieri's nightmare or recollection. What is certain is that again the theme, of defenceless women and children in the face of soldiery, returns.

Again, immediately after the *Massacre of the Innocents* panel, Aringhieri returns to the compensatory theme of Strong Women, like Judith, respected and revered by their culture. The ten *Sibyls* are placed so that they cover the entire space of the nave aisles. They represent not only autonomy but advanced spiritual insight. They rank with the Hebrew male prophets and are given more space on the floor than any other pictorial trope. It is in the

context of female power and stature, in spite of the vulnerability of women, that this series is to be understood. When placed in the context of all the other pictures in the vast section of the Cathedral floor for which Alberto Aringhieri was responsible, it is their autonomy, independence and spiritual authority that is emphasized by Sibyls, perhaps as a counter to any who should despise the intrinsic weakness and vulnerability in women, when encountering armed might.

The next two panels commissioned complete the floor of the transepts and the crossing on its eastward margin. Again the theme is the sacrifice of young, innocent women in war, and revenge for the slaughter of infants. They are the *Sacrifice of Jephtha's Daughter*, and the *Expulsion of Herod*. Aringhieri's mind is clearly seen to run on the same theme.

The last two panels are concerned with men and mysticism. They are the Hermes Trismegistus panel at the west door, and the mysterious Allegory of the Island, where aristocratic male Italians climb the hill of knowledge after their shipwreck. Even here, two women dominate both the picture and the Allegory. They are the figure of Fortuna, who has wrecked the boat, and the figure of Wisdom, gained after a demanding, disciplined climb up the path to knowledge, during which pearls and corals, symbolizing worldly wealth, are hurled into the sea.³⁶⁰ They are, again, powerful women.

There is a last note we need to record about Alberto Aringhieri. If part of his strong commitment to the subject of women and children were the sadness of the celibate soldier, deprived of progeny, at the time of these works in the 1480s, there is a cheerful, if irregular coda to his recorded life history. In Pecci's history of Siena, there is an account, referring to

³⁶⁰ The panel is startlingly reminiscent of Shakespeare's *Tempest*.

the year 1526 long after Aringieri must have died, if he were retired in the 1480s.³⁶¹ At a date long after the works to the floor we read, recording the events of 1526:³⁶²

*Era un tal M. Luzio Figliuolo natruale di M. Alberto Aringhieri, che, legittimato dal Padre, fù creato Cavaliere de Rodi.*³⁶³

The end of the story is not so cheerful. The tale is a truly sad one, worthy of comparison with the story of Absalom, recorded on the floor of the Cathedral. Luzio's existence is recorded in order to give an account of his participation in a political plot, reported to the Balia, after which he was beheaded in the *campo*, before the main doors of the *Palazzo* and his body exposed with that of a companion till night fell, '*per esempio di tutti*'. One hopes his father was dead by 1526 and never lived to see the events recorded.

The Artists Concerned with the Sibyl Cycle

Within the constraints and purposes of this study there is no room to chronicle the life history of each of the individual artists concerned with the Sibyls or to evaluate their works. I have nothing to add to the excellent full list and enlightening details already furnished by Cust on this subject.³⁶⁴ Exact details of the artists concerned with each of the panels on the floor and the dates of the payments made to them according to their contracts recorded in the archives are all found in the Appendices 10 & 11.

³⁶¹ It has not yet proved possible for the Knights of Malta to grant access to the archive so I do not know the dates of his life-time. The Island panel in 1505 is his last contribution to the floor. He had at that time retired from being Rector. His Rectorship lasted from 1481 till 1498.

³⁶² Giovanni Antonio Pecci, *Memorie Storico-critiche della Città di Siena che servono all vita civile di Pandolfo Petrucci dal MCCCCLXXX al MDXII* (Siena: Carli, 1755), p. 198.

³⁶³ '*It was a certain M. Lusio, natural son of M. Alberto Aringhieri, who, legitimised by his father, was created Knight of Rhodes*'.

³⁶⁴ R. H. Hobart Cust, *The Pavement Masters of Siena, 1369-1562* (London: George Bell, 1901), p. 103-142.

2: THE PROBLEM OF 'RESTORATION'

I now will address the question of the present-day appearance of the Sibyls and other contingent parts of the pavement, and past restoration. Does the floor today, after several restorations down the centuries, look like the 1480s original?

The question of the relationship of the present day appearance of a work of art in any medium to its original form is always problematic, particularly after 'restorations', repairs, cleaning, conjectural replacements of missing parts and so on. The problem with the Sienese floor is worse than all others. In no other art form are precious works systematically walked over by hundreds or thousands of pairs of feet every year. Whilst not nearly as fragile as a painted work, marble is a soft stone, and inevitably is worn away over long periods of time, especially in areas such as entrances and exits, where the flow of human traffic is concentrated. That, for example, is why the Sibilla Persica was very worn before the 1864-69 restoration and the reason for the erroneous 'restoration' of the text on the vase panels just outside the West Door of the Cathedral.

The attempt to establish with certainty what was the original appearance of the floor extremely difficult since records of the precise condition of an artefact before 'restoration' were not kept in the past as they are now. Even if the question, 'Is this floor exactly the same in terms of appearance as it was when newly laid?', cannot be answered, we should be able to answer the question, 'Is this floor very like, or only distantly like, the original?' If an answer to that cannot be found, or is, 'It is only distantly like the original and is really a mid-to late-nineteenth-century floor', then there is little point in this study as a contribution to knowledge of Renaissance ideas and artefacts.

The task is difficult but certainly not hopeless. This is partly to do with the nature of the intaglio work in which the images are constructed. If we were considering a painted work, with all the complexities of the mixing of the colours and the kinds of brush-strokes, which had been effectively re-painted several times, then regarding it as any longer as a Renaissance work would be open to doubt. However, what we have here is a different kind

of work, closer to sculpture than painting, but without the complexity of three-dimensional structure. The Sibyl Cycle is put together with just three colours of identifiable marble, still obtainable in the region. There are lines, of variable but measurable width, in black, indicating details, rather like a linear pencil drawing with no shading. This black is an amalgam of soot, lead and other chemicals, whose constituency is known. It was applied to the marble where lines of dots had been drilled into the surface with a trepanning instrument.

In other words, unlike a painting, which has complex chemical and technical construction, what we have here is a jig-saw. Whilst the designs have great beauty and force, they are linear and constructed from blocks of juxtaposed stone, intricately and exactly cut and placed together. Where repair is needed it is possible to match the kind and colour of marble exactly, and to take very accurate tracings of the precise size and shape required. The cutting work, certainly on the South Aisle, was originally done in specified marble, by competent artisans, not necessarily artists. Italian artisans today are equally competent in the same methods of construction. It is therefore possible to conclude, in the history of this floor, that 'repair' and not 'replacement' is an accurate description of the process of conservation.

I have found it possible to justify the opinion, from documentary and other evidence, that if the appearance of the floor is not exactly as it was when it was first laid, it is likely to be very close to it indeed, with the exception of a few individual panels. These have been identified.

It has been possible to identify some completely erroneous 'restoration', caused by the almost total destruction, through wear to the marble, of two of the panels immediately outside the doors in the main West façade: the entrance doors to the right and left aisles. The architect in charge of the nineteenth-century restoration made an intelligent guess as to what text was written on these flasks or vases, of which he could see the remains, and simply got it wrong. He seems not to have had, as I have, the advantage of reading Landi's detailed

seventeenth-century description of the floor.³⁶⁵ As a result of finding out what was originally written in those panels to left and right, I am able to suggest that the initial order of the Sibyl pictures, as they were placed on the floor in 1481, was itself in error. That is to say, the order in which the panels were laid down in the South Aisle by the artisans was not that intended by Aringhieri, or whoever designed the scheme as a whole. The original order would have been suggested by the strong words laid down immediately in front of the right and left entrances to the aisles in which the Sibyls appear. Mistakes in installing individual pictures in a sequence are not uncommon in the Renaissance. It appears that the artisans muddled Sibilla Cumea with Sibilla Cumana, and so vitiated the pattern of Latin oracles in the right and left aisles. Those who installed were not as literate as those who invented the scheme.

The first question to be addressed however, is that of the appearance of the floor today in relation to the original. The limits of accuracy must be made clear. A description of the methods used to trace the history of the damage to the floor and its subsequent repair should indicate the degree of accuracy to be expected.

There are two main methods by which to proceed. The first is to find a similar artefact that has not been the subject of so much restoration, if possible by a Siennese artist concerned with the floor, and compare the works. If the style and techniques are very different, then what we are looking at at Siena is probably, in effect, a nineteenth-century work. The second method is to search as diligently as possible for written accounts of restoration works and accounts of the appearance of the floor in the succeeding centuries after its construction.

³⁶⁵ Alfonso Landi, *Descrizione del pavimento del Duomo de Siena*, (Siena: [n. pub.], 1655), published in Guglielmo della Valle, *Lettere senese sopra le velle arti*, III, 3 vols, (Rome: [n. pub.], 1786), pp. 124-157.

These may be found in histories of Siena, letters, account books and other documents in the city archive and elsewhere.³⁶⁶

Comparison with a Similar Fifteenth-Century Work in the Same Genre not the Subject of Such Intense Restoration

The problem at Siena is that the authorities I have read insist that the intaglio floor panels are unique and found nowhere else, as Carli states:

*dobiamo affermare che il pavimento del Duomo di Siena è veramente una creazione 'unica al mondo', senza precedenti cioè per la tecnica e senza seguito per la sua organicità e ciclica ampiezza.*³⁶⁷

³⁶⁶My fear is that a radical restoration may have been missed. However, restorations are not done unnecessarily. They depend on two things: necessity and funding. As regards funding, Siena's economic well-being, its degree of wealth, has varied. However, it has never sunk to dereliction. As a city with *papabile* ancient families, well-connected in the Church, it has never been without a characteristic Civic pride. As a banking city, it has had possible sources of finances to repair such a significant Sienese art work as the Cathedral pavement when that became necessary. By 'necessity' I mean the length of time it takes to damage the floor by wear and tear to the point where it again needs significant works. Until the recent boom in tourism, one can assume that the numbers of worshippers and art-lovers, whilst not identical, was not significantly different over the course of each century in terms of wear and tear, even bearing in mind temporary fluctuations in population because of war or plague. Till the mid-twentieth-century tourist boom then, wear and tear should be relatively constant, therefore the periods of time between the restorations should be similarly relatively consistent. They are. After the first century and a half after the floor was laid, they occur roughly every hundred years. My hope is therefore, that I have not missed a major, unrecorded series of works to the floor in the period since its construction.

³⁶⁷ Carli, p. 143. 'We must affirm that the pavement of Siena Cathedral is truly, "a unique creation in all the world", without precedent in terms of technique, and without later emulation as far as its aesthetic unity and breadth of narrative cycles.'

This is discouraging. Carli goes on to cite Milanesi, who avers that there are panels in white, black and pink in the portico of the Cathedral Church of San Martino in Lucca, but points out that these are wall panels. If only he had looked inside.

It was in Lucca, in the Cathedral, that I finally found works that were far less subject to restoration and repair, and which were by an artist who had previously worked on the floor at Siena and who went on to contribute to the Sibyl Cycle almost immediately after leaving Lucca. If what remains on the floor at Siena is, in spirit and technique, very similar to what is seen at Lucca, that is powerful evidence that the nineteenth-century radical restoration was repair, not replacement. This study is then concerned with a Renaissance work of Art, not a nineteenth-century fantasy. Whilst that kind of comparison is partly a subjective judgement, as all such judgements must be, the comparison of one artefact with another to establish its authenticity is a necessary discipline.

The ‘Judgement of Solomon’ by ‘Antonio da Siena’ and Other Floor Panels at Lucca

In the anonymous *Die Kathedrale San Martino in Lucca*, we find that, *Im Fussboden des Mittelschiffs stellt ein Marmoreinlegearbeit von Antonio da Siena (1475) das Urteil des Salomon*.³⁶⁸ It is a work of Art of the highest quality, but a cursory glance shows that it is worn, discoloured by dirt and has several marble pieces which are badly cracked, perhaps where heavy objects have been dropped on the floor. As far as can be judged from available documentation, what we have here is an un-restored panel by a major artist from Siena, made at roughly the same time as the Sienese floor was being laid down. Documentary evidence is not conclusive; however, the present state of the floor there indicates that it certainly did not receive the kind of cleaning, repair and refurbishment that was given to the panels at Siena in the nineteenth century. It is doubtful whether it has ever been the subject of such attentions,

³⁶⁸ Anon., *Die Kathedrale San Martino in Lucca* (Lucca: Terzo Millennio, 1997), p.2. ‘On the floor of the nave lies a pictorial work in marble by Antonio of Siena, (1475) ‘The Judgement of Solomon’.

DETAIL OF THE 'JUDGEMENT OF SOLOMON' AT LUCCA

Showing damage by scratching and ingrained dirt



since the floor at Lucca only contains this one pictorial pattern, although there are also two geometric wheel patterns which seems also closely related to those found in Siena. These pictorial panels, since they are not part of a significant overall design, such as that substantially achieved by Aringhieri at Siena, were less likely to attract expensive efforts at conservation. In the photographs of the Judgement of Solomon, seen opposite and on the following pages, the kind of cracking of the marble and the discolouration by grime ground in to the surface by traversing feet can clearly be seen. [See pictures opposite and on succeeding page.] There are portions where the black mastic, used for the delineation of detail has come away, exposing the shallow holes made by the trepanning instrument, designed to improve adhesion. It can also be seen that if the damaged panels were replaced by carefully cut marble from the same local quarries in exactly the same colour, the visual effect would not be changed, except that it would be clean and undamaged. The formula for the black mastic, incorporating salts, lead and soot, is well known and very careful tracing can ensure a high degree of accuracy. Such repairs are analogous to the careful cleaning and repair of Renaissance paintings.

The Nature and Quality of the Picture and the Identity of the Artist

The *Judgement of Solomon* panel at Lucca was commissioned by one Bartolommeo Guarguaglia, and finished in 1477.³⁶⁹ There are mosaic pictorial panels on floors all over Italy, but this is the only example of this kind of marble intaglio work I know of on floor panels outside Siena. Who can the designer have been?

The panel was executed four years after the *Relief of Bethulia* panel at Siena, which is similar in style, and four years before the Siennese *Massacre of the Innocents*, which is startlingly close in design and subject matter. I believe both Siennese panels were designed, but not executed, by Matteo di Giovanni Bartolo. The maker of the picture in Lucca was

³⁶⁹ See Cust, p. 144, who cites E. Ridolfi, *L'Arte in Cucca, studiata nella sua Cattedrale*, (Lucca: [n. pub.], 1882), pp. 163-4.

DETAIL: BYSTANDERS: THE JUDGEMENT OF SOLOMON AT LUCCA



called 'Antonio da Siena'. In an era before surnames were established, this simply means his Christian name was Antonio and he came from Siena. Cust notes that he was also called Antonio di Ghino.³⁷⁰ He derives this information from a note in Milanesi, who promises to give further information later in the work but neglects to do so.³⁷¹ Milanesi avers that his father, Ghino di Paolo da Lucca, a sculptor, though originally Lucchese, had lived long in Siena. We do know, however, that whoever designed the panel would have needed to be an artist of some stature to gain such a commission. It is not safe to conclude that the maker of the picture, the relatively unknown Antonio di Ghino, was the designer of this stunning and sophisticated work. The pictorial techniques employed on the *Judgement of Solomon* panel at Lucca are very advanced. The likely explanation is that di Ghino executed the panel to a design made by someone else, probably another artist at Siena. In my view that is likely to have been Matteo di Giovanni Bartolo, who designed the *Massacre of the Innocents* panel at Siena, which demonstrates the advanced understanding of perspective and formal structure found in the panel at Lucca.

This *Judgement of Solomon* at Lucca is a picture of sublime quality, both in the formal composition and in the achievement of drama in movement and emotion.³⁷² It demonstrates a very advanced technique of perspective and is highly reminiscent of the picture known as

³⁷⁰ Cust, p. 145.

³⁷¹ Milanesi, *Documenti per la Storia dell' Arte Senese* (Siena: Porri, 1856)

³⁷² It is no longer sensible to assume that all readers in English are acquainted with the Bible. Solomon was renowned for Wisdom. The Judgement of Solomon panel illustrates a Jewish Moral / History Story. (I Kings 3.16-28) Two mothers bring a live baby and a dead baby before King Solomon. Both mothers claim the live baby and ask for his judgement. He offers to cut the living baby in half to make a fair judgement. However, he then gives the live baby to the one mother who is ready to relinquish the baby, if he will only let it live. This shows the superiority of the Wise Judgement over the merely fair or legalistic judgement. Whether or not she is the natural mother, he has made the right decision.

The Scourging of Christ, by Piero della Francesca.³⁷³ That polymath and advanced mathematician had, at that date, recently perfected the art of presenting perspective on a flat canvas, by analysing the mathematical principles upon which the illusion rests. *The Scourging of Christ* demonstrates these principles to an extraordinary degree of mathematical precision and was painted about 1475.

The panel at Siena incorporating the new techniques of perspective and most reminiscent of this Luccan picture of *the Judgement of Solomon* is the *Massacre of the Innocents*, designed by Matteo di Giovanni Bartoli. Both panels illustrate dead and threatened babies; both display a technical mastery of perspective. The overall structure of the *Judgement* at Lucca is very similar indeed to that of the *Massacre of the Innocents* at Siena, with two pavilions jutting out on either side of a recessed inner arcade. Design details are startlingly similar, as witness the pillars and capitals in both panels. The passive figures standing observing on either side when violent action is contemplated show a mastery of drama and structure strongly reminiscent of Piero della Francesca's *Scourging of Christ*.³⁷⁴ The *Massacre of the Innocents* shows all the understanding and capacity for designing in perspective, understood from Piero della Francesca and shown here.³⁷⁵

³⁷³ The Piero *Flagellation* might equally convincingly be read as a *Dream of St Jerome*.

³⁷⁴ This is less frequently, but more accurately known as the *Judgement of St Jerome*, or *St Jerome's Dream* (c. 1475), since it seems likely that it portrays the famous dream where Jerome comes before the Seat of Judgement and is punished by a whipping and warned to refrain from reading Gentile books, the Classical canon, on pain of damnation.

³⁷⁵ The texts on the Sibyl Cycle at Siena are those of the Cycle at Rimini, adapted and rearranged. Since these share texts with each other, and with no other Sibyl Cycles, it is very likely that the designer and some at least of the artists at Siena went to Rimini before embarking on such a large-scale arcane work. Visiting the neighbouring Courts of Rimini and Urbino would ensure contact with the major works of della Francesca, including the *Judgement* picture.

Whoever designed it, several points are clear: this is a picture, not subject to extensive restoration, made by a Sienese floor-panel artist close to, or during the period of, the construction of the pictorial floor at Siena. The appearance is very close indeed to the panels at Siena. This does increase confidence immeasurably therefore, that what one sees at Siena is not a re-invention or redesign. The detailed report of the nineteenth-century works says that the only difference in technique in the restoration was that that the marble pieces were cut thicker than the pieces they replaced, in order to give the floor greater stability, and maintain a completely flat smooth surface, thus eliminating the recurrent problem of portions of the floor becoming raised and thus vitiated.³⁷⁶ That being so, one can begin to be confident that what we see at Siena is very close to the original in the case of most panels. Where there have been changes, these can be identified by reference to the written archive at Siena. An account of that forms the next part of this dissertation.

The History of Repairs to the Floor

The essential questions are: How many of these restorations have there been? What was the state of the floor before each of these? (Was a particular panel almost wholly worn away or was it, for example, simply in need of re-setting in a flat plain because of ground movement or needing minor repair of cracked marble pieces?) What methods were used to carry out the restoration and repair and how closely did these reproduce the originals? By careful consultation of the extant textual sources recording the history of the floor it is possible to identify cycles of restoration and to form some idea of how radical these have been and to determine to an extent the degree of wear and damage to the floor that made them necessary. In one particular case, the knowledge that the repair of a particular very worn panel was wholly mistaken, is highly significant to the understanding of the floor. A list of the most relevant documentation relating the successive works of repair and

³⁷⁶ See my translation of that report in Appendix 13.

restoration to the floor will be found in Appendix 12 entitled 'List of the Documentation of the Construction and Repair of the Cathedral Floor at Siena'.

Restorations

Seventeenth Century

1655 Landi mentions a recent restoration of the floor in the dedication of his detailed description of the floor to Cardinal Boncompagni. Landi indicates a total renovation of the external platform of the Cathedral, with the exception of the left flank of the pavement.³⁷⁷

Eighteenth Century

1777 Carli cites Abbot Givacchino Faluschi, in *Breve Relazione*, an edition of which exists dated 1784.³⁷⁸ He speaks of the Allegory of Fortune panel put down in the first decade of the 1500s, and states that a total refacement of it was necessary. Other work to the floor is not mentioned but this may have been part of wider repair work. It is unlikely that only one panel should be very much worn and be the only one to receive attention.

Nineteenth Century

1823 the restoration of the Virtues panels.³⁷⁹

1839 the further restoration of the Virtues panels.³⁸⁰

1864-69 and 1869-79. The two-phased restoration of the whole cathedral floor was carried out in the mid nineteenth century. The detailed accounts for this are reproduced in *facsimile* in Appendix 13.

What is seen from this extraction of dates of repairs is that after the first century and a half in the life of the completed pictorial floor, repairs became necessary roughly every 100

³⁷⁷ See Carli, p. 148.

³⁷⁸ See Carli, p. 143.

³⁷⁹ See Carli, p. 146.

³⁸⁰ See Carli, p. 146.

years or so. The most significant events were probably the almost total re-drawing of the *Wheel of Fortune* panel in 1777 as well as damage to the *King David* panel. The *Wheel of Fortune* panel was immediately in front of the original High Altar, placed under the cupola, where communicants would walk every week to take the sacrament. It would become very worn indeed. As to the total redrawing of the *King David* panel, I am less convinced. It is immediately in front of the rails to the sanctuary, the new position for receiving the elements after the altar was moved in 1532. It would therefore be subject to the same wear thereafter as the *Wheel of Fortune* panel, formerly. What Faluschi actually says however, is that it was very badly retouched. That damage would not be irretrievable, and what now appears, presumably after the careful nineteenth-century restoration, is wholly credible as the design of Domenico di Niccolò del Coro. However, one must bear in mind that it has suffered pictorial damage in its past.

The most significant alteration for our purposes is however, the alteration of the words *fel* and *mel* placed at the left and right entrances of the West façade. Since Landi, in 1655, attests their presence, the change must have been either in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. It is clear that in such a position, the words could have been almost entirely obliterated. Overconfident intelligent guesswork based on the remains of lettering, rather than research, must be to blame for the present text, since clear records exist in Tizio and Landi. Today, the panels read '*Lact*' and '*MeI*', *milk* and *honey*, an intelligent but erroneous guess. However, the significant damage is the loss to the iconographic rhetoric of the floor, its symbolic meaning, understood and explained so well by Landi.³⁸¹ There are no longer two ways of entering the Cathedral, the bitter path on the left and the sweet and honeyed path on the right.

This brings us to the third topic on the floor:

³⁸¹ Landi, pp. 256-7.

3: THE QUESTION OF THE PATTERN AND ORDER OF THE SIBYLS

There is no need to suppose in 1480 that even famous artists could read. Pinturicchio left labels blank on many a painting and specialist writers, like modern sign-writers, seem to have been employed to add the written words later, in many cases, perfunctorily, with precious little regard for the boundaries of the label. The words flow over the edges of the labels with a lack of care that Pinturicchio would never have tolerated. They must have been applied after he finished his contract and left the site. We can be quite sure that those who inserted the lettering into the labels here at Siena were not able to read Latin, since there are so many examples of nonsense on the text on the floor. Word boundaries are removed or gaps are mistakenly inserted in the middle of words. If you look carefully at the panels it is obvious that the text has been copied with no understanding. The nineteenth-century academics who restored the floor supervising every intervention, certainly had good Latin. It is a tribute to their conservation skills that they seem to have resisted all temptation to correct these fifteenth-century renderings.

The artists then, who were not themselves Humanists, and sometimes not even literate, were working to detailed instructions from Humanist scholars. The scholars would research the subject, on the instructions of the man commissioning the work, and the artists would then be given detailed orders as to what they were to do. When working with illiterate artists the opportunity for error is large. They cannot follow written instructions and must be closely supervised, probably by Aringhieri himself. Let him go away on embassy to Ferrara or Florence, and a frightful error occurs.³⁸² This is what seems to have happened here, in terms of the order in which the Sibyl panels went down onto the floor. There are also mistakes made by the Humanist designer in the distribution of costume and symbolic objects. There are in addition, erroneous attributions of oracles to individual Sibyls. They are

³⁸² There is also a known phenomenon, often discussed by calligraphers and letter-cutters, called today engraver's blindness, that is, concentration on letter form removes temporarily the capacity to read.

like a troupe of actors who are wearing each other's clothes, carrying each other's props, and occasionally speaking each other's lines. Worse than that! They have come on in the wrong order.

Let us consider the matter of their order.

The Sequential Order of the Sibyls

There are ten Sibyls in the Siena Cycle: five Sibyls in the left aisle and five in the right. There are five bitter oracles concerned with Death and Judgement, and five sweet-sounding oracles about Salvation through the birth and coming of Christ and his Sacraments. The oracles themselves would be chosen from Lactantius and Virgil, by the Humanist creating the over-all design of the Cycle. Oracles in Lactantius are rarely attributed to particular Sibyls, even though the Varronian list of ten is recorded. Oracles are usually preceded by the phrase, 'The Sibyl said...', so the designer has chosen to have five negative and five positive sayings and would also choose how to place these on the floor. The Sibyls are not in the Varronian or any other predetermined order. All of the oracles on the right except one are 'Sweet', 'Honeyed words'. From Landi's careful account of the floor, we learn that in 1655 the entrance to the right aisle was preceded by the picture of a vase, originally bearing the word *mel* (*honey*), the entrance on the left was originally preceded by the word, *fel* (*gall*) and four out of the five sayings on the left are bitter.³⁸³

It is very unlikely that the selection and order of the oracles was arbitrary. There was at the time a great Humanist interest in numbers and patterns as symbolic of meaning. Left and Right had huge significance for Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Mediaeval Christian literature which symbolism was undiminished in the Renaissance. Bad, evil and negative characters and tidings came on from the left in Greek Drama, good from the right. At the General Judgement, the Good will be on Christ's right, the damned on his left. The organising principal of the Sibyl's oracles here is not hard to see, it is carefully labelled for us at each

³⁸³Landi, pp. 124-257.

entrance. Entering on the left (Latin: *Sinister*) side we traverse the jar of gall and are met by bitter judgemental sayings, on the right there is a jar of honey followed by honeyed words of Salvation. Except for one aberrant panel on each side, the pattern is completely preserved. Why should there be aberrant patterns? The first Sibyl, the Sibilla Delphica, adjures the ambulant reader *Know thy God Himself, Who is the Son of God*. (Lact. *Div. Inst.* IV vi 256) a positive piece of advice to one who has literally taken the first steps to such knowledge by entering the Church. This positive advice has a negative correlative saying found on the opposite side of the Cathedral, though not in the opposite position, the pattern having been vitiated. The Samian Sibyl announces, '*For thou foolish Judea, hast not known thy God, shining in the minds of men. But thou hast both crowned him with thorns and hast mixed for him nauseous gall.*' The design of the pictures of these two Sibyls balance each other perfectly, each clad in fluttering scarves or stoles, with gowns of similar structure turning in towards each other and having tripods constructed of strange classical beasts, placed inward next to the nave. The designer of the Delphic Sibyl is unknown, but the style of the designs is so similar that it is very likely that the same artist designed the pair. There is no doubt at all that the designer of the Samian Sibyl, Matteo di Giovanni Bartoli, since it is signed by him at the foot of the tablet and dated there, 1483. A very low fee is recorded as having been paid on completion of the panel. This may mean that he was on the permanent staff of the Cathedral.

In each case of there being a positive statement on a particular aspect of Salvation, there is an opposite negative oracle on the same theme. A conjectural floor plan showing the order of the positive sayings in the right aisle (with the negative Cumana) removed and matched in each case with a negative saying on the same theme on the left is found in Appendix 14: 'Diagrams concerning the Order of the Sibyls Panels on the Siena Pavement'.

There is a wholly credible hypothesis that explains the facts and is supported by the documentary evidence, that is, that there was a mistake on the part of the Latin-illiterate artisans laying the floor. They had a series of designs, and a written order in which to lay

them on the floor. They mistook the Sibilla Cumea, for the Sibilla Cumana. The mistake would have been all the easier to make if, as is likely, the contracted forms of these words were used.

Documentary evidence in the account books showing payments to the artists and artisans shows that the right aisle was the first to be laid down in 1481.³⁸⁴ The work started by the door and proceeded towards the High Altar, then placed in the Crossing. The first four panels, Delphica, Cumea, Cumana and Erythraea were laid, starting in Spring 1481, and three of them were paid for on 19 July 1481. The (erroneously placed?) Cumana panel seems never to have been paid for. The most careful accounts were kept by the vigilant committees at Siena, and there is no record anywhere of a payment having been made. Work stopped abruptly in high summer, in July. The whole of the rest of the warm season, suitable for building, passed by and no further work was done, according to the accounts.³⁸⁵ (Winter is not a good time to lay mortar; intense cold causes it to crack and become friable.) No further work was done that summer. In the spring of the next year, work started on the left-hand side leaving the end panel on the right not laid down. It is as though the director of the project was unsure what to do about the right-hand side. Removing the Cumea panel, if that were the problem, would be wasteful and expensive, both concepts inimical to the traditionally careful city fathers of Siena, held by some to be excessively mean with public funds. In any case, the Persian Sibyl at the top of the right-hand aisle was the last to be laid, as late as 8 October, 1483 if, as seems reasonable, the payment records are an indication of the times when the work was completed. The remaining positive panel, that of the Albunea, was placed at the top of the left-hand aisle, next in sequence to the other positive panels, almost as if it had been shunted into that position by the presence of the negative Cumea in the right-hand sequence.

³⁸⁴ See Appendix 11: *Siena Floor Archival Material Table*, for full quotation and identification of the documents.

³⁸⁵ See Appendix 11.

Work commenced on the left-hand aisle in Spring 1482, and the Albunean was laid down at the top of the aisle by the altar and paid for on 18 May. What then happened, was that the men started to lay the 'negative' left-hand Sibyls onto the floor. Instead of starting at the West Door with the Samian, as seems to have been intended, if the oracles are to match the themes of the right-hand Sibyls, the workmen continued to lay the left-hand panels, starting next to the Albunean that they had just completed at the head of the aisle next to the altar instead of starting at the West door as they had done the year before with the right aisle. The Samian Sibyl, first on the list, was evidently intended to be next to the West Door, since its oracle reads, *'Thou foolish Judea has not known thy God....but hast ... mixed for him nauseous gall'*. thus matching its subject to both its partner on the right (*Know thy God*), and to the panel immediately outside the door (*'Gall'*). The sequence in the left aisle is substantially correct, but it flows in the wrong direction, from East to West, instead of West to East, the direction of approach to the Altar. Once the sequence of negative and positive oracles was vitiated by the placing of the Cimmerian Sibyl, the pattern was irretrievably destroyed. A conjectural reconstruction of the intended order is given in Appendix 11.

The installation of works of art in the wrong order is far from uncommon in the period. One may ask why there is a concern about order. Are these not wholly successful pictures as they stand, a decorous and appropriate addition to the History of Ideas, and account of the Humanist insights in Siena and Florence at this point in the Renaissance? To an extent that is true, but the presence of the Cycle itself, allied to the picture of Hermes Trismegistus at the great West Door, argues a tough mind. Tough minds are not arbitrary; they see pattern. There is a numerical and thematic pattern, implicit in the choice of ten Sibyls and the choice of particular oracles, five negative, five positive. That this would not have been reflected in the physical placing of the panels in the architectural space is inconceivable.

4: DESCRIPTION OF THE FLOOR AS IT NOW APPEARS

a) THE APPEARANCE OF THE SIBYLS: THEIR ATTRIBUTES AND COSTUMES

There is not space in a work of this limited compass to give a full account of every costume design on the floor. There will therefore be a general account of the kind of costumes found here, the influence of the printed image on the designs at Siena.

The General Approach to Costume Design at Siena

The costumes we see on the floor at Siena, with few exceptions, are adaptations of contemporary fashion, with some elements that make reference to classical dress. Unlike the designs at Rimini, there is no serious attempt at rendering historical costume, except perhaps in the case of the Sibillae Cumana and Cumea.

It has been previously supposed that the eminent artists employed to design the panels were original in their handling and presentation of costume. This is not so. Only recent ages place a high value on originality in artists. The Renaissance sensibility had a very high regard for ancient tradition and established precedent. Strict guidance was clearly given to them about form size and structure, producing an aesthetic unity of the floor as a whole within which the Sibyls could have individual appearance. The assumption of scholars has been that little or no guidance was given to the artists in the matter of apparel. This is not so.

There are three pictorial influences at work on the costumes at Siena. the carvings at Rimini, the Baldini Engraving and the Barbieri Woodcuts. I have found such a close correspondence between the costume designs found in Ravenna, the printed and published engravings by Baldini, the Barbieri Woodcuts and some of the costumes at Siena, that there is little doubt that reproductions of these they were given to the artists as source material. The particular attributes derived from each of these sources may be understood clearly by consulting the Appendix 9: 'Table of Attributes'.

COMPARISON BETWEEN SIBYLS AT RIMINI AND SIENA



The Strong Similarity between the Sibyls of Cumae at Rimini (top) and Siena (below)

The Pictorial Influence of the Sibyl Cycle at Rimini

The reason that we can be sure that there was direct influence from Rimini to Siena is the appearance of the costume and attribute of the Sibilla Cumana. The costume is very closely based on the classical garb at Rimini, and there is with her a pile of burning books, just as there is at Rimini. [See picture opposite.] These do not appear in the Baldini engravings or in the Barbieri woodcuts. They could of course have been simply part of the oral instructions given to the artist by the Humanist writer of the overall scheme. However, the combination of the attempt at Classical dress, atypical of Siena, and the small pile of burning books to the left, is an indication of pictorial influence.³⁸⁶ There is also a striking resemblance between the Cimmerian Sibyl at Rimini and that at Siena. [See picture overleaf.]

The influence of the Baldini Engravings

The Baldini engravings had a powerful influence at Siena, and, as we have seen, at the Casa Cavassa in Saluzzo. The Baldini engravings, following the designs at Rimini and perhaps the stage presentation of the Annunciation, in Florence, gave particular 'props' or characteristic attributes to individual Sibyls. The designs at Siena adopt several of

³⁸⁶ If I am right, those who laid down the floor may have confused the Sibilla Cumea and the Sibilla Cumana. However, they were not alone in the confusion. The Humanist who made the overall iconographic scheme was also muddled. The Sibilla Cumea is the Cimmerian Sibyl, Virgil's Sibyl, who ran mad in the cave at Lake Avernus, possessed by the god, after Aeneas had found for her the Golden Bough. We see her in the second panel in the right aisle. The Sibilla Cumana, laid down next in sequence, third on the floor, is the Sibyl of Cumae on the Italian coast above Naples, who burned some of her books, centuries later, when spurned after offering to them to Tarquin. The burning books are correct, they do belong to the Cumana but it is to the Cumea that the Golden Bough was given. This third panel, labelled Cumana, is, in iconographic terms, a composite muddle of the two Sibyls, having both the Golden Bough and the Burning Books.

COMPARISON BETWEEN SIBYLS AT RIMINI AND SIENA



Sibyl 8 at Rimini (as well as Sibyls 1 and 3) show a strong similarity to the Cimmerian Sibyl at Siena

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE BALDINI ENGRAVING AND THE SIENA
TIBURTINE



C.II.10.A



C.II.10.B

THE STYLES : FINE AND BROAD MANNERS

THE TIBURTINE SIBYL



these.³⁸⁷ The Sienese costumes particularly influenced by the Baldini engravings are as follows: Libica; Head wreath and plaits Delphica, Horn or Cornucopia; Erythraea, borrows the distinctive turban and chin scarf of the Baldini Hellespontine Sibyl; the Albunean / Tiburtine Sibyl follows Baldini engraving very closely indeed having both the hairy animal skin about her shoulders and the exotic helmet with the pointed front. [See picture opposite]

Baldini worked for the so-called Finiguerra-Pollaiuolo workshop, and the influence of some of Finiguerra's designs can clearly be seen at work here, especially those from the *Picture-Chronicle* and the *Triumph of Love* series, for which Baldini produced the engravings, many years before, in the early 1460s. The young Botticelli also worked for the Finiguerra-Pollaiuolo bottega, and it was in that context that Baldini began to be his engraver, an association that continued as Botticelli's fame increased. The Humanist compiler of the over-all scheme for the Sibyl cycle, very probably Aringhieri, seems certainly to have had the Baldini engravings before him. Aringhieri made diplomatic journeys to Florence and was certainly acquainted with the Humanist philosophers, writers and artists there. Baldini's Florentine Sibyls series was published in the early 1470s. I strongly suspect that the Botticelli influence that I detect in the designs for the floor comes from this source, i.e. that whoever compiled the overall design was familiar with both Botticelli's work and Baldini's engravings of his work, and that the easily available and transportable engraved images were source material for the Floor designs. The picture of Judith bearing the head of Holophernes in the Siena Floor panel *The Relief of Bethulia*, is a case in point. If we compare it with Botticelli's little painting of Judith and her handmaid with the head of Holophernes there are so many points of correspondence. There are as in the Botticelli painting two women portrayed on the floor. Just as in the Botticelli, the handmaid strides behind Judith with a basket on her head. The basket is covered. The only way to know why the second woman is there, is to know the Botticelli, where the wind lifts the

³⁸⁷ See Appendix 9.



Botticelli: Judith with a handmaiden and the head of Holophernes



Siena Floor: The Relief of Bethulia: Judith with a handmaiden

covers exposing the severed head of Holophernes. In the more minor details of physical attitude, costume and the handmaid's manner of carrying the basket on her head, the debt to Botticelli is enormous.[See comparison of pictures opposite.] Of course, the picture on the floor is a mirror image. That implies that the designer of the Sieneese floor panel was looking at an engraving not the original.³⁸⁸ (The engraver would copy the Botticelli picture, incising it onto the plate. When the plate is used to make a print, a mirror image is produced. The designer of the floor would make a drawing from the print and the floor marble would be cut and engraved to reproduce that drawing directly.)

The Albanian / Tiburtine Sibyl's helmet has its sources in Baldini's early work for the bottega. The first Sibyl with such a helmet is the Tiburtine of this series. As previously noted, I believe I have found a source in the undated, but early, Florentine engraving *El Gran Turko*.³⁸⁹ That drawing belongs to, or initiated a manner of drawing exotic eastern dress, founded on the very foreign habit of the Turkish enemy of Florence and indeed all Christendom. This was adapted again and again in the Finiguerra-Pollaiuolo workshop, as witness *Talhythius*, drawing by Finiguerra in the *Picture Chronicle* and the exotic bearded figure in the procession of *The Triumph of Love*.³⁹⁰ The Albanian Sibyl's outlandish headgear, somewhat like a ship's prow, inheritor of this tradition, simply implies exotic strangeness, in the folk story of the emergence from the river waters at Albanac of a Sibyl, perfectly dry, and carrying her book of prophecies undrenched.

The influence of the Barbieri Woodcuts

The third controlling influence on the designs produced at Siena, were the series of woodcuts by Barbieri.³⁹¹

³⁸⁸ Very likely to be another Baldini engraving.

³⁸⁹ See illustration after p. 185.

³⁹⁰ Already illustrated above in Part 1, Chap. 3: Baldini & Barbieri

³⁹¹ I am greatly indebted throughout this section to De Clercq.

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE BARBIERI WOOD CUT EMERIA AND SIENA CUMAEA



The Sienese panels influenced by the Barbieri series are the Sibillae Cumaea and Persica. The Persica has a windblown head-dress very like that of the second-series Barbieri Samia. However, the really close correspondence, too close to be accidental, is between the two images of the Sibilla Cumaea, the Barbieri 1481 first-series image of the Sibilla Emeria.³⁹² and the Sienese 1482 panel. [See comparative illustration opposite.] The *costume all'antica*, the bodily carriage, the position of the feet, the position of the arms, the wild and flying hair, the strong sense of movement from right to left, all show very strong correspondence. In his journeys to Florence, Aringhieri had every opportunity to purchase the illustrated *Tractatus*. The fact that it went into so many editions indicates how generally the material was being discussed amongst intellectual circles in this part of Italy. The strong argument about the validity of pagan wisdom found in its pages would validate much of Aringhieri's experience in foreign service. Possibly the book itself, with all its illustrations, and certainly the subject it addressed, were the starting points for the amazing floor at Siena, with Hermes Trismegistus inviting the gentile world to study his laws, planted at the main entrance of this Christian Cathedral.

b) Text: The Names, Labels and Oracles of the Sibyls at Siena

Each Sibyl has two inscriptions:

A **LABEL** which announces her name and supposed literary source or authority. All of these are direct quotations from Varro's list of Sibyls, recorded in Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* I (vi) 32-34.

A **SAYING**, purporting to be the direct speech of that Sibyl. These oracles are all taken from *The Divine Institutes* with the exception of the Sibillae Cumana, Erythraea and Albunea. As the label indicates, the Sibilla Cumana speaks part of Virgil's *Eclogue IV*, the so-called, *Messianic Eclogue*, mentioned by Lactantius in relation to this Sibyl, but not

³⁹² The terms, *Emeria*, *Cimeria*, *Chimica*, *Cimmerian*, and *Cumaea*, all indicate the same Sibyl in the Renaissance.

actually quoted in his work. The Erythraean Sibyl here speaks the canonical oracle. I have so far been unable to discover the origin of this oracle. It is not found in Lactantius. The Albunae Sibyl's canonical oracle is said by authorities to come from Italian folklore, but none give a reference in any written record of such folklore. I have not yet been able to trace its source.

The order in which I shall examine the texts will be that in which they appear on the floor, starting with the first of the series to have been laid down. I shall start therefore, in the right aisle, with the Sibyl next to the west door, the Delphica, laid down in 1482, and proceed up the aisle. I will then discuss the texts that appear on the left aisle starting nearest to the west door, with the Libica, laid down in 1483.



Siena: Sibylla Delphica

SIBILLA DELPHICA

INSCRIPTIONS

LABEL **SIBYLLA DELPHICA DE QUA CHRYSIPPUS LIB DE
DIVINAT**

*Sibylla Delphica of whom Chrysippus (wrote in) the book, 'On
Divination'. Source: Lactantius Div. Inst. I (vi) 33*

ORACLE **IPSUM TUUM COG
NOSCE DEUM
QUI DEI FILIUS EST**

*Know thy God himself, Who is the Son of God. Source: Lactantius, Div.
Inst. IV (vi) 256. Lactantius attributes the saying to, "another Sibyl",
not particularly the Delphic.*

ICONOGRAPHY

ATTITUDE Looking towards the central aisle, just as the Samian Sibyl does.

ATTRIBUTES She carries a horn or cornucopia with flames issuing from it, possibly
to indicate Divine inspiration.

DRESS Her dress is contemporary fourteen-eighties high Italian fashion with a
few adaptations to indicate "antique" dress, that is the voluminous
untailored cloak and the sandals. She has a flying ribbon streaming
out from her elbow and a tasselled curling ribbon tied under the bust
which echo those of the Samian Sibyl. Pictorially they are so similar
in style as to suggest that the same artist produced both designs and

³⁹³ Note their very similar oracles. They were probably originally designed as a pair and intended to occupy the first position in both right and left aisles.

INSCRIPTION The name label is a simple insertion of a rectangle of white marble.

MOUNTINGS The Delphica's oracle is mounted on a lectern of similar construction to that of the Samia. The text is on a rectangle to the left of the panel, with decorated lateral ends. This is supported by a winged beast with angel torso and with legs of a 'cabriole' outline, making a vase shape. This is echoed by the Samian Sibyl's lectern whose inscription plate is similarly mounted and on cabriole beasts, lions, placed on the right of the panel making a mirror image with this one. Both these are echoed in the Hermes Trismegistus panel which lies in the nave aisle next to this Sibyl. Its lectern is again supported by fabulous beasts, winged sphinxes.



Siena: Sibylla Cumaea

SIBYLLA CUMAEA

INSCRIPTIONS

LABEL

SIBYLLA CUMEA

QUAM PISO INANN

ALIBUS NOMINAT.

The Sibylla Cumaea whom Piso names in the Annals. (Note the transgression or omission of word boundaries in the Latin indicating a non- or semi-literate artisan.). Source: Lactantius Div. Inst. I (vi) 33 quoting Varro's fourth Sibyl. Varro also cites Naevius as source, but this label does not mention this.

.ORACLE

ET MORTIS FATUM FINI

ET. TRIUM DIERUM SO

MNO SUSCEPTO. TUNC

AMORTUIS REGRESSUS

IN LUCEM VENIET PRIM

UM RESURRECTIONIS

INITIUM OSTENDENS

And he shall accomplish the fate of death, having undergone a sleep of three days. Then, being returned from the dead, he shall come to the light, showing the beginning of the first resurrection. Source: "The Sibyl" unspecified in Lactantius Div. Inst. IV (ixx) 297. (Note word boundary omission.)

ICONOGRAPHY

ATTITUDE

She is Virgil's Sibyl, running mad in the cave, with devastated eyes and streaming hair. Whoever has designed this has taken *Aeneid* VI (77-80) as his text.

**At, Phoebi nondum patiens, immanis in antro
 Bacchatur vates, magnum si pectore posit
 Excissem deum: tanto magis ille fatigat
 Os fabidum, fera corda domans, fingitque premendo.**

In the picture she does indeed run wild about the cave with flying hair and raving mouth. She is Deiphobe, the one who flees from the influence of the God. However, in Vergil this is the Sibyl at Cumae on the Coast, that is the Sibylla Cumana, not the Sibilla Cumea (the Cimmerian Sibyl). This is the first Sibyl he consults, who sends him off to get the Golden Bough. He has to have the Golden Bough so that he can consult the second Sibyl by lake Avernus in the mountains and enter Hades there. Something has gone wrong with the iconography or the naming on this floor! The Humanists of the 1480s knew their Virgil very well.

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| ATTRIBUTES | Book and streaming hair. |
| DRESS | An attempt at “Antique” dress, low at the neck and loose to reveal her frantic movement. This is anatomically weak and indicates a master not of the first rank. It is highly derivative of its pictorial source in Baldini. |
| INSCRIPTION | The Label is supported by winged cherubs and has a triangular |
| MOUNTINGS | adornment at each end. This is very like that of the Albuncean Sibyl, similarly adorned and carried by a flying cherub, but whose stately calm is wholly in contrast to this mad possession. |

SIBYLLA CUMANA

INSCRIPTIONS

LABEL

SIBYLLA CUMANA CUIUS MEMINIT VIRGILIUS ECLOG. IV.

The Sibyl of Cumae who is recalled in Virgil's fourth Eclogue. Source: Lactantius Div. Inst. I (vi) 33

This Sibyl is mentioned by name by Lactantius, quoting from Varro. Varro refers to the famous story of Tarquin and the burning of the Sibylline books, seen in the iconography of this panel. He does not mention Virgil as a source. Virgil was a contemporary of Varro's, but younger. Virgil being his junior, Varro was unlikely to cite him as a revered source. It appears that Aringhieri, or whoever compiled the general scheme, has gone outside Lactantius to find the Sibyl's oracle. Virgil was so revered that it was likely that the famous text of the fourth Eclogue as a record of the Cumana's utterance sprang immediately to mind

ORACLE

**ULTIMA CUMAEI VENIT IAM
CARMINIS AETAS MAGNUS
ABINTEGR O SAECLORUM
NASCITUR ORDO IAM RE
DIT ET VIRGO, REDEUNT
SATURNIA REGNA, IAM
NOVA PROGENIES CAELO
DEMITTITUR ALTO**

Now has come the last period of Cumaean song. A great order of the ages is reborn The Virgin now returns and the Kingdoms of Saturn return. Now a new progeny is sent down from high Heaven. Source:



Siena: Sibylla Cumana

ICONOGRAPHY

- ATTITUDE** Her head turns right towards the nave.
- ATTRIBUTES** These are confused. She stands by a pile of burning books, which belong to the myth of the Sibyl of Cumae. However, in her right hand she holds the Golden Bough that belongs to Virgil's other Sibyl, who conducts Aeneas to the Underworld, i.e. it belongs to the Cimmerian Sibyl in the previous panel. She also holds a book.
- DRESS** The dress is a real attempt at the Classical. She wears sandals and a himation, worn in the Classical manner over her head and extending to her feet. She is elderly. (Perhaps cursed with eternal life without eternal youth.)
- INSCRIPTION** Naked flying cherubs, very like those of the Cumaea, support the plain,
- MOUNTINGS** rectangular oracle tablet.



Siena: Sibylla Erythraea

SIBYLLA ERYTHRAEA

INSCRIPTIONS

LABEL **SIBYLLA ERYTHRAEA**

QUAM APOLODO

RUS SUAM AIT ESSE

CIVEM.

The Erythraean Sibyl of whom Apollodorus asserts she was its citizen.
Source: Lactantius *Div. Inst.* I (vi) 33

ORACLE The Oracle appears on two pages of an open book thus:

DE EXCELSO	ET NASCETUR
CAELORUM HA	IN DIEBUS NO
BITACULO PRO	VISSIMIS DE VIR
SPEXIT DOMI	CINE HEBRAEA
NUS HUMILES	IN CUNABULIS
SUOS	TERRAE

From the high habitation of Heaven God has looked down on his humble (servants) and he shall be born in these latest days of a Hebrew Virgin in the cradle of the Earth. Source: Unknown, though canonical.

ICONOGRAPHY

ATTITUDE Facing the front.

ATTRIBUTES She holds a closed book in her right hand, the conventional symbol for Sibyls to indicate that they each have a body of oracles associated with them. Her left hand touches the book held open on the lectern.

DRESS The gown is conventional 1480s’ high fashion to indicate her status.

Her headgear is very interesting, since it is a vestigial version of the Baldini Helespontica's turban with a ligature under the chin and a shoulder-cloth hanging at the back. In the Barbieri engravings both this headgear and the '*De Excelso*' oracle are attributed to the Helespontica. The canonical attribution is however to the Erythraeae. This ligature and turban appears also in the Babieri series II woodcuts and at Saluzzo in sculpture and fresco.

INSCRIPTION The label is inscribed on a plain rectangle resting on a low rectangular
MOUNTINGS fielded plinth. The open book rests on an ornate lectern to the right of the panel. The sculpted form of the marble lectern is that of a plant growing in a pot decorated with a pattern of tendrils. The connection of a vegetative design to this Sibyl or her oracle is not clear. This may have been heavily restored. There is a stiffness and lack of the lyrical line we find impressive in most other panels, and no sense of space or perspective. The lectern should be longer and have its base level with her feet, if her hand can reach to her side to touch the book. The panel is signed at the base of the lectern: *Antonius Federici MCCCCLXXXII*.



Siena: Sibylla Persica

SIBYLLA PERSICA

INSCRIPTIONS

LABEL

SIBYLLA PERSICA

CUIUS MEMINIT NICANOR

The Persian Sibyl recalled by Nicanor.

Source: Lactantius *Div. Inst.* I (vi) 33

ORACLE

PANIBUS SOLUM QUINQUE

ET PISCIBUS DUOBUS HO

MINUM MILLIA IN FOENO

QUINQUE SATIABIT RELI

QUIAS TOLLENS XII

COPHINOS IMPLEBIT

IN SPEM MULTORUM.

With five loaves and two fishes He will satisfy the hunger of five thousand people on the grass. Taking up the remains, He will fill twelve baskets, for the hope of many. *Source: Lactantius, Div. Inst. IV (xv) 282.*

ICONOGRAPHY

ATTITUDE

Persica, Delphica and Samia are so alike in style with ribbons and stoles flying out in the breeze as they move, and a certain delicacy of line and elegance of carriage, that one is tempted to suppose that, even if those who cut the marble varied, they may be the work of the same designer, whose flying tassled garments imply lively, graceful movement. The only separately noted payment, specifically for design, is for the Samia, on 24 May, 1483, to Matteo di Giovanni Bartoli. However, Landi, in 1655 opines that the designer of the Persica was

Urbano di Pietro di Cortona. He does not cite documentary evidence, however.

ATTRIBUTES She carries the conventional Sibylline Book.

DRESS Conventional fifteenth-century fashionable dress,

INSCRIPTION The label is a plain inserted rectangle at the foot of the picture, adorned

MOUNTINGS with lateral triangles. The plaque for the oracle is of the same pattern, supported on a lectern of intricate design, being supported on a base with three animal feet. This animal motif also relates the design to those of the Delphica and Samia.



Siena: Sibylla Lybica

SIBYLLA LYBICA

INSCRIPTIONS

The Sibylla Lybica has two inscriptions: one on the book she carries in her right hand, the other on the tablet supported by the unusual lectern.

LABEL **SIBYLLA LYBICA**
CUIUS MEMINIT
EURIPIDES

The Libyan Sibyl whom Euripides recalled. (Varro adds, 'in the Prologue to Lamia'.) Source: Lactantius *Div. Inst.* I (vi) 33

ORACLE on the left and right pages of the book in her right hand

COLA	DABIT
PHOS	IN VER
ACCIPI	BERA
ENS TA	INNO
CEBIT	CENS
	DORSUM

Receiving buffets he will be silent, he will give his innocent back to blows. Source: 'The Sibyl' is not named by Lactantius. *Div. Inst.* IV (xviii) 293. This is in precis form to fit the small book. The full text of Lactantius runs:

Into wicked hands and those of the unfaithful he will afterwards come. They will heap upon God stripes from unclean hands, and from impure mouths they will spit defiled sputum, but he will give for their blows his innocent back.

When the whole oracle is recognised as printed here, it is clear that

Siena shares this text with one of the Sibyls at Rimini. Siena and Rimini do not use the canonical text but make a separate and different selection from the Sibylline oracles in Lactantius, as well as from other sources. They do however, share some of these alternative texts.³⁹⁴

ORACLE

on the snake lectern to her left:

INMANUS INIQUAS

VENIET. DABUNT DEO

ALAPAS MANIBUS IN

CESTIS. MISERABILIS

ET IGNOMINIOSUS

MISERABILIBUS SPEM

PRAEBEBIT

Note missing word boundary INMANUS at the beginning.

He shall come into wicked hands. They will give God stripes, with corrupted hands. Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* IV xviii 293, 'The Sibyl' un-named.

He, miserable and in ignominy, will give hope to the miserable.

Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* IV xvi 287, 'The Sibyl' un-named.

ICONOGRAPHY

ATTITUDE She faces the front but looks to her left, gazing towards the nave.

ATTRIBUTES A floral wreath on her head. She carries a book in her right hand an empty scroll in her left; both are conventional symbols for a Sibyl, not

³⁹⁴ See the Appendix 2 'Table of Sibylline Oracle Texts: their Location and Attribution'.

particular to the Libyan. She is a black, African Sibyl. There is only one other black Sibyl in the Cycles of Italy known to me. She is at Piani, Imperia in the Church of Santa Maria Assunta. That fresco was painted in 1488, so may have been influenced by Siena.

DRESS

The dress with patterns at neck and hem with what may be applied jewels, or decorative embroidery, is fifteenth-century Italian high fashion, to give status to the Sibyls. The voluminous cloak, a single rectangle, is equally Renaissance and Classical.

INSCRIPTION

The stand or lectern on which the oracle plaque rests is remarkable. It

MOUNTINGS

consists of a central vase with an exotic plant growing from it, having single fruits, rather like hot peppers, growing out of it to right and left. Perhaps it is intended to indicate Africa. The plant is encircled by two snakes, in a formal balanced pattern. Together, the two snakes and the plant make the feet of a tripod on which the plaque rests. The snakes have small wings just behind their heads and the whole effect is startlingly like a Japanese or Chinese design, they look like Dragons. However, the intention must be to suggest the exotic snakes of the Libyan desert, from which this Sibyl comes. They also reflect the presence of the snakes and the tripod in Eusebius's description of the Pythia, whom he mistakenly took to be a Sibyl, on which the garb of this Sibyl is erroneously based.



Siena: Sibylla Hellespontica

SIBYLLA HELLESPONTICA

INSCRIPTIONS

LABEL **SIBYLLA HELLESPONTICA INA**
GRO TROIANO NATA QUA(M) SCRIBIT
HERACLIDES CYRITE(M) PORE

The Hellespontine Sibyl, born in the fields of Troy, of whom Heraclides wrote and who lived in the time of Cyrus. Note the inaccurate word boundaries. Source: Lactantius Div. Inst. I (vi) 33

ORACLE **IN CIBUM FEL IN SITIM ACE**
TUM DEDERUNT HANC
IN HOSPITALITATIS MO(N)STR
ABUNT MENSAM: TEMPLI
VERO SCINDETUR VELUM
ET MEDIO DIE NOX ERIT
TENEBROSA TRIBUS HORIS

For food gall, in his thirst they gave him vinegar. They will show forth this inhospitable table. The veil of the Temple shall indeed be rent and at mid-day there shall be dark night for three hours. Source: This saying is an amalgam of two quotations from Lactantius, both only attributed to ‘the Sibyl’, without naming her. The first two sentences are Lactantius, Div. Inst. IV xviii 293-4, the third, IV ix 296-7.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁵ I believe, had the panels gone down in the correct order, that this should have been laid near the High Altar, where communicants take the Holy bread and wine, willed to them by Christ, in contrast to his own bitter nourishment. It should, I think, have been balanced on the opposite, right-hand aisle by the Sibylla Persica’s statement, *With five loaves and two fishes He will satisfy the hunger of five thousand people*’.

ICONOGRAPHY

- ATTITUDE** Facing the front and with eyes downcast to her left.
- ATTRIBUTES** She carries the conventional Sibylline Book.
- DRESS** The dress is high fashion late fifteenth-century costume, to give status to the Sibyl. The voluminous flowing cut of these garments, with a belt just under the bust gives a Classical appearance to the clothing which is fortunate and fortuitous.³⁹⁶ The voluminous cloak, a single rectangle, is equally authentic for the Renaissance and the Classical era.
- INSCRIPTION** The inscription is mounted on a plaque on pillars, like a tomb or small altar.
- MOUNTINGS** A wolf and a lion, in a remarkable gesture, appear to shake hands. This symbolises the recent peace made between Siena (the Wolf) and the league of Cities ranged against her, including Florence (the Lion). At the time Florence shared the Lion of St Mark, (the *Marzocco*) as its symbol. (See the *Wheel of the Confederate Cities*, on the floor of the nave, where the lion is labelled, *Florentia*.) The handshake is also part of the liturgy of the Mass. Just before receiving communion, the Christian makes peace with God by confession, and his neighbour by a symbolic handshake. This association of 'Peace' with Holy nourishment is in accord with the text here.

³⁹⁶ The dress is also reminiscent of nineteenth-century design, especially Lord Leighton's classical pictures. However, one must be careful about assuming that this is just a result of the nineteenth-century restoration.



Siena: Sibylla Phrygia

SIBYLLA PHRYGIA

INSCRIPTIONS

LABEL

SIBYLLA PHRYGIA QUE

ANCYRAE VATICINATA EST

The Phrygian Sibyl who prophesied at Ancyra. Source: Lactantius *Div.*

Inst. I vi 34

ORACLE

There are two oracles.

On the pages of the open book she holds up in her left hand:

SOLUS

DEUS

SUM ET

NON EST

DEUS

ALIUS

Only I AM God, and other God there is not. Source: Lactantius, *Div. Inst.*

I (vi) 35

On the tablet to which her right hand points:

TUBA DE CAELO VOCEM LU

CTUOSAM EMIT ET TARTARE

VM CHAOS OSTENDEDEHIS

CENS TERRA VENIE(N)T AD TRIBU

NAL DEI RECES OMNES DEUS

IPSE IUDICANS PIOS SIMUL

ET IMPIOS TUNC DEMUM IM

PIOS INIGNEM ET TENEBRAS

MITTET QUI AUTEM PIETA

TEM TENET ITERU VIVENT.³⁹⁷

Note inaccurate word boundaries.

Source: There are three amalgamated quotations from Lactantius here. All of these form part of St Augustine's rendering of this in *City of God*, Book XVIII, Ch. 23, as the Erithraean Sibyl's Acrostic. It then formed part of the Rite of the Sibyl, performed on Holy Saturday before Easter Sunday, and also on Christmas Eve, subsequently suppressed in the Counter-Reformation. It is odd then, that these words are put in the mouth of the Sibylla Phrygia, not the Erythraean, famously their speaker.

The trumpet shall sound from Heaven a mournful voice. Lactantius *Div. Inst.* VII xvi 517. Attributed to the Erythraean Sibyl.

Yawning Earth shall reveal Tartarean Chaos. All Kings shall come before the Tribunal of God. Lactantius *Div. Inst.* VII x) 522. Attributed to the Erythraean Sibyl.

God himself judging the wicked and the good together. Then, at length, He will send the wicked into fire and darkness but whosoever will keep Righteousness shall enter into life. Lactantius *Div. Inst.* VII xx 530. Attributed simply to 'the Sibyl'.

ICONOGRAPHY

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| ATTITUDE | She faces the front, as though the better to indicate her written oracles. |
| ATTRIBUTES | The conventional Sibylline book. |
| DRESS | She wears attic dress with sandals exactly like the Sibylla Cumana. |

³⁹⁷ Bracketed letters indicate that there are contraction marks on the floor itself.

Both wear cloaks and tight undertunic sleeves with decorated borders.

INSCRIPTION The longer inscription is engraved on a plain rectangle supported by

MOUNTINGS ornate decorated short legs. The appearance is a bit like a tomb or *stèle*.

In the space under it, heads and shoulders of human figures are seen, apparently signifying the resurrection of the dead referred to in the oracle.



Siena: Sibylla Samia

SIBYLLA SAMIA

INSCRIPTIONS

LABEL **SIBYLLA SAMIA DE QUA**
LOQUITUR ERATOSTHENES

The Samian Sibyl of whom Eratosthenes spoke. Source: Lactantius Div. Inst. I vi 33

ORACLE **TU ENIM STULTA IUDAEA**
DEUM TUUM NON CO
GNOVISTI LUCENTEM
MORTALIUM MENTI
BUS SED ET SPINIS CO
RONASTI HORRIDUM
QUE FEL MISCUISTI

For thou, foolish Judea! Hast not known thy God, shining in the minds of men. But thou hast both crowned him with thorns, and hath mixed for him nauseous gall. Source: Lactantius, Div. Inst. IV xviii 294. 'another Sibyl'.

ICONOGRAPHY

ATTITUDE A wonderful fluid rendering of a woman in motion, both feminine, graceful and dignified. As has been previously noted the Persica, Delphica and Samia are so alike in style with ribbons and stoles flying out in the breeze as they move, that one suspects a single designer.

ATTRIBUTES She carries the conventional book.

DRESS Contemporary fifteenth-century dress, but hitched up over two girdle bands, a la Greque. The band at the hip ties a remarkable central ornament of a cherub's head and wings. The fringed and tasselled sash

flies out at her side, very like that of the Delphic Sibyl.³⁹⁸ Both have ribbon bands flying out decoratively above the inscription tablet, and from their hair.

INSCRIPTION Both the Samian Sibyl and the Delphic Sibyl's inscriptions are
MOUNTINGS mounted on rectangles with decorated lateral ends and upon lecterns consisting of fabulous beasts with a 'cabriole' profile. In both cases the beasts are devoid of fore-limbs, the body tapering straight into hind leg. At the centre of this tripod is a vase .

³⁹⁸ With whom I believe she was intended to be paired.



Siena: Sibilla Albunea

SIBYLLA ALBUNEA

INSCRIPTIONS

LABEL **SIBYLLA ALBUNEA QUAE TIBUR**
TINA COGNOMINATA EST, QUOD
TIBURI PRODEO COLEBATUR

Sibylla Albunea, who is also called 'Tiburtina', who is revered as a goddess at Tibur. Source: Lactantius *Div. Inst.* I vi 34

The Varro quotation continues in Lactantius,

near the banks of the river, Anienis, in whose depths her image is said to have been found, holding a book in her hand. The picture reflects this, so whoever instructed the designer probably informed him of this.

ORACLE **NASCETUR CHRISTUS**
IN BETHLEHEM ANNUN
CIABITUR IN NAZARETH
REGNANTE TAURO PACI
FICO FUNDATORE QUIE
TIS, O FELIX MATER CU
IUSUBERA ILLUM LACTA

BUNT. Note the word boundary inaccuracy.

Christ shall be born in Bethlehem. He shall be announced in Nazareth, the peaceful Taurus, founder of Peace, being in the ascendant. Oh happy Mother, whose breast shall give him milk.

Source: The source of this is folklore. The story is that already related of the Emperor Augustus, who visited her to consult her about whether to allow the Senate to declare him a god in his lifetime. Whilst with her he received a dramatic vision of Our Lady and the Infant Jesus, and a

voice sounded from Heaven that the coming Christ child should be the only God on earth. The emperor then built an altar inscribed, ARA PRIMOGENITI DIE, The Altar of the Firstborn of God, now enclosed in the Cappella Santa (or *di Santa Elena*) in the Church of Santa Maria Aracoeli in Rome. What is there now seems to be an early Mediaeval altar, below what is now ground level. However, I have been so far unable to find a manuscript or printed source for the exact wording found here.

ICONOGRAPHY

ATTITUDE She faces slightly to her left, and is a delicate, elegant and serene figure.

ATTRIBUTES Her remarkable helmet has been previously discussed in the section on pictorial sources immediately above this section. She has a hairy animal skin over her shoulders and carries a book in her left hand.

DRESS Her dress is extremely eccentric, with helmet, animal skin and strange hood under her helmet. However, with the exception of the closely laced tight-fitting sleeves, the gown is an attempt at costume *all'antico*. It is a rendering of the Greek Ionic *chiton*, with a *kolpos* at the hips. The grace of the figure and the flying out of the stole, as though under the breeze of the *pneuma* or breath of inspiration, relate it to the Persica, Delphica and Samia. One is compelled to ask whether they were all by the same inspired designer. Carli writes that Pecci (1752) says that Benvenuto di Giovanni del Guasta received two payments on 18 May, 1483, '*per disegno di una Sibilla in duomo ne' pavimenti*,' but

I have not yet traced the archival origin of this remark.³⁹⁹ The Samia panel is undoubtedly by Matteo di Giovanni Bartoli, signed by him at the foot of the tablet and dated there, 1483. Attributions of other artists to this group of Sibyls, by Landi, Pecci and others is less secure.

INSCRIPTION The oracle is inscribed on a rectangle with lateral triangular
MOUNTINGS adornments. It is suspended by attractive ribbons issuing from a flying cherub head with wings, rather like that on the costume of the Sibylla Samia.

³⁹⁹ See Carli, p. 150. See also Appendix 11.

**A STUDY OF THE EARLY RENAISSANCE
SIBYL CYCLES IN THE ART OF
NORTHERN AND CENTRAL ITALY**

IN 3 VOLUMES

VOLUME III

Reba Ann Gibb

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APPENDICES

LIST OF APPENDICES

There are several appendices to this dissertation. This is because many of the most important documents supporting this thesis are very difficult of access. Most are not in English and require translation as well as *facsimile*, if they are to be useful to English-speaking scholars. Some late mediaeval manuscripts are, even by expert estimation, so difficult to read, because of the individual handwriting style, that they require the effort of transcription before translation. *Facsimile*, when permitted, transcription and translation are therefore here recorded for the convenience of scholars.

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APPENDIX 1

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF CLASSICAL TEXTS REFERRING TO SIBYLS

APPENDIX 1: A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF CLASSICAL TEXTS REFERRING TO SIBYLS

GREEK LITERATURE

THE ARCHAIC PERIOD: c.750–480 BC, the defeat of the Persians at Salamis

HERACLITUS (c.540-480 BC) ‘SIBYLLA’ reported in Plutarch *Moralia*. 397A. ‘Her prophecies reached a thousand years.’ The name is used as a personal name for an individual, unique Sibyl.⁴⁰⁰

THE CLASSICAL PERIOD: 480-223 BC, the death of Alexander the Great

ANONYMOUS SAMIAN HISTORIAN (mid-fifth century BC) ‘HEROPHILE, THE SAMIAN SIBYL’ reported by Eratosthenes, Fragment source is found in F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1926-58) p. 241 f.26. The Samian Sibyl existed in the Archaic period, was lost to the Classical period and was rediscovered in the Hellenistic era by the great Hellenistic scholar, Eratosthenes (c. 275-194 BC) in *F. Gr. Hist.* 241 f.26, suggesting Sibylline oracles were on Samos early in the sixth century. Eratosthenes was tutor to Ptolemy Eurgetes and head of the great Library at Alexandria. In his historical researches, he was able to consult the ancient annals of the Samians then conserved in that Library.

XANTHUS OF LYDIA (mid-fifth century BC) Xanthus of Lydia was a historian writing in the mid fifth century, a contemporary of Herodotus. He is one of the earliest prose

⁴⁰⁰ Heraclitus is the first to write about Sibyls. He was the Presocratic originator of ideas that became central to our Western European Christian culture. He believed that the Eternal does not consist in some primary and basic material substance but in the universal *Logos*, which men can, but do not, understand. Awareness of the *Logos* is the foundation of knowledge and the primary goal in life. This concept was hugely influential later in Christian cosmology; as can be seen in the opening of the Gospel of St John.

historians. He writes of his native Lydia, of which Croesus was King, a hundred years before, almost within accessible living memory, which gives his account some authority. **The story of Cyrus and the Sibyl** is told in his *Lydiaca*, a history of Lydia, which is now lost but is recorded by **Nicolaus of Damascus**, court Historian of Herod the Great. See F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historike*, hereafter referred to as *F. Gr. Hist.*⁴⁰¹

EURIPIDES (c. 485- c. 406 BC) ‘THE LIBYAN SIBYL’ is a fictional invention in his satyr play, *Busiris*, not yet dated. *Fragmenta*, p. 403 (Nauck, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, 2nd edn., (Lipsiae: Teubneri, 1889).

ARISTOPHANES (c. 455- c. 385 BC) ‘THE SIBYL’: evidence of a popular tradition of Sibylline oracles. He mentions the Sibyl in his second extant play, *The Knights* of 424 BC, whose plot is mainly concerned with the significance of oracles. The central character a silly old man, is described as being, ‘*crazily eager for the Sibyl*’. In *Peace* (421 BC) the name ‘Sibylla’ is used twice, but simply as a joke. It is always assumed that the Sibylline oracles are preserved in writing.

PLATO (c. 429-347 BC) ‘SIBYLLA’ seems to be used by him as a personal name for an individual Sibyl. *Theages* 124 D; *Phaedrus* 244B.

ARISTOTLE (384-322 BC) ‘THE SIBYLS’ *Problems* 30 Quaestiones 1, 954a, 3b. ‘The Sibyls’ are used as a generalised term for a species of prophetess, although legends of two individuals were extant by this time.

CALLISTHENES (c. 370-327 BC) ‘THE ERYTHRAEAN SIBYL’ Callisthenes, Aristotle’s nephew, ‘*known for his works on Greek history but not a wise man*,’ was the next firmly dateable authority to write on Sibyls.⁴⁰² He was Alexander’s official historian, accompanying him through the Asiatic lands on his great expedition. Eventually, Alexander put him to death. He is one of the first to write of the claim of Erythrae to have been the

⁴⁰¹ F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1926-58) 90 f.68.8.

⁴⁰² *Oxford Classical Dictionary* entry for Callisthenes.

origin of the Sibyl, writing in about 332 BC. The fragment source is found in F. Jacoby, *Fr. Gr. Hist.*, p. 124 f. 14 (Strabo 17.1.43)

HERACLIDES OF PONTUS (mid-fourth century BC) 'THE HELLESPONTINE (or Marpessan) SIBYL' 'THE ERYTHRAEAN SIBYL', 'THE DELPHIC SIBYL'. A lost work, *Concerning Oracle Centres* is known to us through quotations. There are four extant Classical citations by name and title of Heraclides's work, *Concerning Oracle Centres*, and six more citations of his name in connection with scholarly work on the topic.⁴⁰³ For significant citations see Diogenes Laertes 5. 86-93; Varro *Antiquitatum rerum humanarum et divinarum libri XLI* ap. Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 1 (vi) 9; Pausanias, 10. 12. 3; Nicolaus of Damascus, *F. Gr. Hist.* 90 f. 68.8; Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*. 1. xxi. n.8; Proclus, *In Timaeus*, 1.90. In a passage found in Lactantius's *Divine Institutes* I (vi) 34, Lactantius quotes from Varro who is citing Heraclides. She is probably identical with the Lydian / Hellespontine / 'Persian' Sibyl mentioned first by Xanthus of Lydia (see above). Heraclides connects her with the village of Marpessus near the town of Gergithus, saying that she lived in the time of Solon (c. 640-after 561 BC) and Cyrus (559-529BC) making her of considerable longevity. Clement of Alexandria (b. AD 150) briefly cites surviving fragments from Heraclides *Oracle Centres*, in which he gives the Erythraean Sibyl a personal name, *Herophile*, identifying her as the Sibyl summoned by Cyrus. Clement also says that Heraclides mentions the Delphic Sibyl perhaps the same as the Phrygian Sibyl, '*There was a Phrygian, called Artemis, and that she visited Delphi and sang,*' claiming to be the sister of Apollo.

EPHORUS OF CYME (c. 405-330 BC) Ephorus was the most important historian of the fourth century, apart from Xenophon, and is famous for his *Universal History*, in thirty books. In that work he describes the oracle centre at lake Avernus practicing divination and its strange troglodyte cult mentioned also by Homer. He does not, however, specifically mention a Sibyl.

⁴⁰³ See Parke, p.24.

NICANOR OF STAGIRA (c. 360-317 BC) 'THE PERSIAN SIBYL' Whilst Varro (116-27 BC), the most eminent Roman scholar, cites 'Nicanor' as the written source for his, 'Persian Sibyl', it is merely an assumption that this writer is the Nicanor who came from Stagira, who shared with Alexander the tuition of Aristotle and was later the commander of Alexander's Greek fleet. Nicanor is a very common Macedonian name. The writer could have been a later historian. However, Varro cited him as, he 'who wrote the deeds of Alexander of Macedon,' and it seems not unlikely that his close childhood companion and trusted friend might write his biography. I therefore include him here. 'The Persian Sibyl', is hard to identify since nothing more is known of her than her appearance in Varro's list. She is the first Sibyl that he mentions

THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD: 323 BC to Rome's defeat of the last Greek dynastic ruler, Cleopatra, at the Battle of Actium in 27 BC

PHILETAS OF EPHEBUS (uncertain date, probably Hellenistic), **THE DELPHIAN, ERYTHRAEAN AND SIBYL AT SARDIS.** Sources: in the Scholia on Aristophanes, *Peace* 1071; *The Birds* 962. Suda, s.v.. Bakis; See also C. Müller, *Fragmentum Historicorum Graecorum* vol. 4 (18510, p. 474. See also Parke., pp. 27-8, 45, 183, 189n25.

APOLLODORUS OF ERYTHRAE (Hellenistic, of uncertain date), The Erythraean Sibyl prophesying that Homer would lie about the Trojan War. We know of Apollodorus from the famous list of ten Sibyls made much later, in 47 BC, by the Roman scholar, Varro. The Christian apologist, Lactantius (c. 240-c. 320), writing the *Divine Institutes* between AD 303- 313, quotes Varro's citation of Apollodorus, '*affirmat fuisse civem suam.*'⁴⁰⁴ A version of this appears on the floor of Siena Cathedral on the label of the Erythraean Sibyl, '*Sibylla Erythrea quam Apollodorus suam ait esse civem.*' Apollodorus apparently went on to give some details of her prophecy. '*She prophesied to the Greeks when they were on their way to*

⁴⁰⁴ '[Apollodorus] affirms she was of his native city'.

Ilion, that Troy would fall and that Homer would write falsehoods.' This is the earliest written evidence that the Sibylline oracles were concerned with the Trojan War. Sources: See F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1926-58) p. 422. See also Strabo, 14.1.54. and Callisthenes entry in *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* 124 f 14a.

CHRYSIPPUS THE STOIC (280-207 BC) SECOND SOURCE FOR THE DELPHIC SIBYL. Stoicism was developed and refined so compellingly by Chrysippus that he was later deemed to have defined Stoic orthodoxy. He was Head of the Stoa from 232 to 207. In his books on divination he argued that it was an authentic science. One of his two books on the subject dealt with oracular responses.⁴⁰⁵ Some record of this is found in Cicero, in *De Divinatione* 1.6 and 1.37, published just after Caesar's murder. In this work Cicero examined the idea of Fate and the possibility of prediction. He records Chrysippus's stoic belief about these matters, though he had no sympathy with it. Chrysippus had painstakingly recorded copious examples of the Pythia's predictions at Delphi, with evidence confirming them.

ERATOSTHENES OF CYRENE (Libya), (c. 275-194 BC) SOURCE FOR THE SAMIAN HISTORIAN. Eratosthenes of Cyrene, the Hellenistic scholar, was royal tutor to Ptolemy Euergetes, Greek ruler of Egypt, and succeeded Apollonius of Rhodes as Head of the Library at Alexandria. Parke thinks that Eratosthenes was not referring to sources he found on Samos but that he unearthed the little known Samian historian from the archives of the Library.⁴⁰⁶ His *Chronographiae*, represents the first scientific attempt to fix the dates of political and cultural events and is probably the source of the account of the Samian Historian and the Sibyl. The picture of the Samian Sibyl on the floor of Siena Cathedral has a label giving the literary source as Eratosthenes. This is however, derived from Lactantius,

⁴⁰⁵ See Parke, p. 33 and fn. 22 p. 48.

⁴⁰⁶ See Parke, p.29.

Divine Institutes I (vi) 33. Lactantius cites Varro, (116-27 BC), the Roman scholar, who gives Eratosthenes as *his* source for Sibylla Samia.

ROMAN LITERATURE:

LATIN LITERATURE OF THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD (323-c. 27 BC):

LYCUS OF RHEGIUM (fl. 300 BC) *De Mirabilibus Auscultationibus*, which work is often attributed to Aristotle says that the Sibylline cult at Cumae was founded by the Erythraean Sibyl.

NAEVIUS (d. 201 BC) SECOND SOURCE FOR THE CIMMERIAN SIBYL. He was the first of the Roman dramatists to use native Roman rather than traditional Greek subjects for Tragedy. *Bellum Poenicum*, known to us through fragments, is thought to include an account of the Cimmerian Sibyl.

PISO (mid-second century BC) THIRD SOURCE FOR THE CIMMERIAN SIBYL. **Lucius Calpurnius Piso Frugi, the annalist.** His *Annales* covered the sweep of history from the origins of Rome to his own time, in at least seven books. The latest date is 146 BC. Antiquarian and mythological fragments are also attributed to him. He compared his own time unfavourably with ancient virtue, presumably influenced by Cato the Censor. He offers rational explanations for myths and legends. Varro cites the *Annals* of Piso as one of his *two* sources for the Cimmerian Sibyl, and Lactantius quotes Varro (250-320 AD) in his *Divine Institutes*.

VARRO (116-27 BC) THE FAMOUS LIST OF TEN SIBYLS. Varro's famous list is preserved in Lactantius's *Divine Institutes*. (See below)

THE PERIOD OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

PUBLIUS VERGILIUS MARO (70-19 BC) THE CUMAEAN AND CIMMERIAN SIBYLS. The fictional accounts of Aeneas's encounter with the Sibyl of Cumae and the Cimmerian Sibyls are in the *Aeneid*. These would however be based on serious study of

occult practices of the time. His 'Messianic' *Eclogue IV*, was understood by Christians to be Divinely inspired and an oracle of the coming of the Messiah.

PROPERTIUS (c. 50-c. 3 BC) In the *Carmina*, his collection of poems he gives his girlfriend the Greek pseudonym of 'Cynthia', one that the Renaissance took up. She is far more of a real personality than Ovid's Corinna. In praising her, he announces that even Sibylline age cannot alter either her face, nor his love for her. Not so, as it later transpired.

OVID (43 BC-17 AD) friend of Propertius, describes in the *Fasti*, the festival of Anna Perenna. This ungraceful festival encouraged the participants to drink as many cups of wine as they hoped for happy years of life. Ovid notes women who apparently hoped for Sibylline longevity. In Book XIV of *Metamorphoses*, he gives the Sibyl a more serious and sustained treatment. He uses the narrative of Virgil's *Aeneid* as a framework in which to insert episodes of transformation. However, he adds to the end of the narrative, making the emergent Aeneas, fresh from Hell, promise to erect a temple to her, an offer she speedily refuses. She explains that she is not immortal, but merely destined to live a long time, as many years as she had held grains of sand, that is for a thousand years. After this she will be transformed into a mere voice, continuing to speak. There is none of the characteristic levity or flippancy with which Ovid often treats legends. She explains that she has already lived seven hundred years by Ovid's time and that she has three more centuries to stay alive.

LUCAN, (AD 39-65) wrote the *Bellum Civile*, sometimes mistakenly called the *Pharsalia*. The influence of Virgil appears in his great literary 'set piece' of Appius Claudius's consultation with the Pythia. Whilst the Pythia, was not a Sibyl, the influence of *Aeneid VI* can be clearly seen. Lucan changes the place of consultation from the *Adyton* of the Temple at Delphi, to a vast cave, He also imitates Virgil's account of the Sibyl's frenzy, her 'Divine Madness'.

MARTIAL (AD 40-c. 104) in the *Epigrams*, uses Sibylline reference flippantly to taunt a prostitute in a mock epitaph that her age is unequal to that of the Sibyl's, she being three months the younger.

STATIUS, (AD 45-96) Statius was accorded a far greater importance by mediaeval and renaissance scholars than he now enjoys. It is the *Silvae*, the collection of thirty-two occasional poems, published from AD 92 onwards, about friends and their life events that contains the account of the Sibyl. Statius's patron was Domitian, younger son of the Emperor Vespasian and, unlike his childless elder brother, Titus, incorrigibly mediocre. He succeeded Titus in AD 81. The completion of Domitian's new road, the *Via Domitia*, was the occasion which prompted the Sibylline poem. The Sibyl hails the road as something she foretold aeons before.

PETRONIUS (first century AD) Petronius Arbiter may be the same person as Petronius, the courtier of Nero, to whom Tacitus refers, as the arbiter of taste in that 'artistic' court. He wrote *The Satyricon*, a work of which part of book 14, and books 15 and 16 remain to us and constitute what is called the *Cena Trimalchionis*, *Trimalchio's Feast*. It describes the rake's progress of Encolpius, the narrator, and his boy friend, Giton. Comparisons have been made with Nero. Petronius relates the myth of the Sibyl at Cumae. According to that myth, Apollo had asked the Sibyl to be his lover and said he would grant any wish. The Sibyl wished to live for as many years as there were grains of sand in a pile of sweepings. These numbered four thousand. The Sibyl however never gave herself to Apollo. Perhaps in anger and frustration, Apollo insisted that as she had forgotten to ask for concomitant youth, she could age till she became unbearably frail and shrank in stature. She shrank till all that was left was a speaking voice. Trimalchio, a character in Petronius's *Satiricon*, had seen her with his own eyes, hanging from the ceiling of her cave in a bottle. When children asked her what she wanted, she used to reply, 'I want to die.'

JUVENAL (c. AD 50-c. 130) When Juvenal, the last great Roman satiric poet, writes of his friend's retirement to the coast at Cumae in the third *Satire*, he speaks of him as adding one citizen to the Sibyl.

PAUSANIAS (fl. c. AD 150) In *Description of Greece*, Pausanias gives extensive, reliable accounts of the Sibylline shrines as they were in his day. He also gives a gripping account of his own submission to chthonic ritual.

AELIAN(c. AD 170-235) ‘Aelian’, Aelianus Claudius, appears to be the last extant pagan writer who speaks of Sibyls. He writes *On the Characteristics of Animals*, moralising anecdotes containing the reference. Aelian was Pontifex at Praeneste, and so had a developed interest in oracular religion. From ancient times Praeneste had had an oracular tradition and was the seat of the famous, *Sortes Praenestinae*, or Praenestian Lots, which Roman Emperors, foreign rulers, and ordinary citizens consulted in the massive temple of Furtuna Primigenia, probably the largest sanctuary in Italy. He writes about, ‘the *four* Sibyls: the Erythraean, the Samian, the Egyptian and the Sardian. He adds that ‘others say’ that there are a further six so that there are ten in all among whom are the Cumaeen and the Judean.

THE ROMANO CHRISTIAN PERIOD

HERMAS (mid-second century AD) Hermas, in *The Shepherd*, gives an account of dreams he had in which he met an old woman who gave him wonderful counsel on the road to Cumae, whom he supposed to be the Sibyl. Later he discovered that she was not the Sibyl but a personification of the Church. He writes in Greek, even when resident in Rome.⁴⁰⁷

CELSUS (mid-second century AD) Celsus’s arguments are available to us in Origen, *Contra Celsus*. He attacks Christians, describing their more absurd sub-groups, one of which is the ‘Sibyllians’ who ‘Put forward the Sibyl as the Child of God rather than Jesus, who led a most objectionable life and suffered a most contemptible death’.⁴⁰⁸ Origen says there was never any evidence of such a cult and that Celsus must have mis-heard.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (c. AD 150-215) Clement quotes an apocryphal treatise, *The Teaching Proclaimed by Peter (Petrou Kerygma)*, in which the Apostle Paul, speaking of Peter’s teaching, says, ‘Take also the Greek books, get to know from the Sibyl how she revealed one God and the things to come.’⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ See Parke, p. 169.

⁴⁰⁸ See Parke, p. 155. Parke’s translation.

⁴⁰⁹ See Parke, p. 156. Parke’s translation.

JUSTIN MARTYR (mid-second century AD) In his *Apologia*, wrote that the same Spirit inspired the Sibyl and the Old Testament Prophets.⁴¹⁰

ATHENAGORUS (second century AD) In an appeal to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, (AD 177-80) is the first Christian apologist to cite the Sibyls verbatim. He cites her as a witness, acceptable to educated pagans.

TERTULLIAN (c. AD 160-230) In *Ad Nationes* written in AD 197, quotes the same passage as Athenogoras, from Book 3 of the *Oracula Sibyllina*, but treats it with sarcasm and rejection of the validity of the Sibyl. He says that there was a truly good, inspired Sibyl, before Literature, but says the pagans have used her name as a cover for wicked utterance, as contained in the *Oracula*. This was written in Tertullian's orthodox period, but is characteristically intemperate.

EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA (AD 260-340) Eusebius mentions the Sibyl in *Praeparatio Evangelii*, mentions the Sibyl, but only in reference to citations by other writers: Josephus, Clement of Alexandria and Tatian. (*Praeparatio Evangelii* 9.416D; 10.495C; 13.678D; 681D). He was prepared to allow that even pagans could be moved by the Spirit of God, but gave no special status to Sibylline inspiration.⁴¹¹ Appended to his *Life of Constantine*, the Emperor who made Christianity the official Roman religion, we find a sermon in which he describes the appearance and attributes of the Erythraean Sibyl. The sermon was probably delivered by Constantine and essentially written by Eusebius, although the text as delivered has an overlay of Constantine's personal style.

SAINT THEOPHILUS (Second Century AD) In *Ad Autolycus* Saint Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch in the last years of the century, says that people of the past including the Old Testament Prophets and the Sibyls could be inspired by God.

⁴¹⁰ See Parke, p. 158.

⁴¹¹ See Parke, p. 161.

PSEUDO-JUSTIN (last half of the third century AD) In *Cohortatio ad Graecos*, he recalls his meeting with ‘guides’, probably pagans, minor officials of the Temple of Apollo, on the way to Cumae. He recalls the Sibyl as very old and mentioned by Plato, and producing oracles while tranced, with no memory of them afterwards. This is a muddle with the Pythia. The guides excuse anomalies by blaming the ‘errors’ on scribes who took the oracles down in writing.

LACTANTIUS (c. AD 245-c. 325): CLASSICAL SOURCE FOR THE SIBYLS OF SIENA AND RIMINI. Lactantius in the *Divine Institutes*, cites Varro’s list of ten Sibyls and makes extensive use of Sibylline oracles to persuade educated upper-class pagans of the validity of Christianity, presenting it as the fulfilment of the prophesy of their own culture. He is one of the most significant writers citing the Sibyls in the early Christian era. He seems to have given more attention to Sibyls, their history and oracles, than any other Christian Father.⁴¹²

ST JEROME (EUSEBIUS HIERONYMUS c. AD 347-420) In the letter to Eustochium, Jerome explained his vivid dream of coming to the judgement seat and being accused of being a pagan rather than a Christian because he read more of Cicero than his Bible. This was in a period of great sickness. Jerome promised never to read pagan literature again if given a chance to return to life. Thereafter he learned Hebrew, and made the great ‘Vulgate’ translation of the Bible, replacing the unsatisfactory translations into Latin that were in circulation at the time.

ST BASIL THE GREAT (c. AD 330-379) In *Ad Adulescentes*, the *Address to Young Men*, St Basil outlines to young Christians what good may be derived from reading Classical literature, and in what manner it is to be read by the faithful.

ST AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (AD 354-430) Augustine writes after the establishment of Constantinople, when Latin became the predominant language of the Western Empire. He

⁴¹² See Parke, p. 163.

has no Greek. At first in *Against Faustus* Augustine has faint praise for the Sibyl, whose oracles he seems to know little about. However, later in *De Civitate Dei*, he relates the time when he was discussing Christ with the Proconsul of Africa, Fabianus, a learned man who knew Greek, and introduced Augustine to a volume in Greek of the ‘poems of the Erythraean Sibyl’. He showed Augustine the famous acrostic, that Constantine had quoted in his sermon. Augustine changed his mind as a result of this meeting, rendered the acrostic into Latin and opined that the Sibyl ought to be included in the City of God. He then gives a prose rendering of the teaching of the Sibyls based on Lactantius.

SOZOMENUS (d. c. AD 450) In his *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.1.6 and 2.1.10, the historian and lawyer in Constantinople, Sozomenus, attributes the fact that few pagans were influenced by the truth of the Sibylline oracles, to limited circulation. His writing indicates that he has little knowledge of the Sibyls.

QUODVULTUS: BISHOP OF CARTHAGE FROM AD 437-453. Quadvultus was made Bishop seven years after Augustine’s death. He wrote an unsavoury sermon *Against Jews, Pagans and Arians* subtitled *Sermo de Symbolo* which in the Middle Ages was taken to be by St Augustine and incorporated into the Rite of the Sibyl. The sermon is divided into twenty-two chapters, the section against Jews, chapters XI – XVIII, begins, ‘*Vos inquam convenio, O Judei!*’⁴¹³ The last prophecy in the whole sermon is that of the Erythraean Sibyl whose words are exactly those of the Latin translation used by St Augustine. In this repellent sermon, we see the seeds of mediaeval anti-Semitism.

JOHN THE LYDIAN (early sixth century) In *De Mensibus* 4.47, this Byzantine scholar speaks of coming across a book of Sibylline Oracles while he was in Cyprus and quotes the Hebrew or Chaldaean Sibyl. The way he writes implies that he himself finds Sibylline oracles unfamiliar and expects his readers to have similar lack of knowledge of Sibyls and Sibylline oracles.

⁴¹³ I’m speaking to you, O Jews!

APPENDIX 2

TABLE OF SIBYLLINE ORACLE TEXTS: THEIR LOCATION AND ATTRIBUTION

APPENDIX 2: TABLE OF SIBYLLINE ORACLE TEXTS: THEIR LOCATION AND ATTRIBUTION

SIBYLLINE QUOTATIONS IDENTIFIED BY KEY LETTER WITH NAMES OF SIBYLS TO WHOM THE QUOTATIONS ARE CONVENTIONALLY ATTRIBUTED

Quotations are given in the fullest version that I know of, frequently that of the Revello Sibyl List. Individual works of art may curtail or précis these in order to fit the overall design or the architectural constraints on space. The order of the quotations is taken from the Olomouc MS. account of the Orsini fresco. The order is that in which Varro cites them, as recorded in Lactantius and apparently reflected in the original Orsini fresco. By giving each quotation a key letter, a table can be made (see below) to show which Sibyl speaks them in each cycle. The table reveals a remarkably consistent pattern of oracles not previously discovered to be universal, i.e. consistent in all cycles independent of location.

A: Always PERSICA.

Ecce bestia conculcaberis et gignetur dominus in orbem terrarum. / Et
gremium virginis erit salus gentium et pedes eius in valitudine hominum.

Invisibile verbum palpabitur.

(Revello MS.)

*Behold, He will tread down the beasts, and be begotten Lord of all the
kingdoms of the world in the lap of a virgin, he will be the saviour of mankind
and his feet bring the health of mankind. The invisible Word will be made
palpable flesh.*

Other paraphrased versions are:

Ecce bestia conculcabitur et gignetur dominus in orbem terrarum. / Et in
gremium virginis erit salus gentium et pedes eius in valitudine hominum.

(Edinburgh MS.)

Ecce Filius Dei belluam equitans Dominus universi cuius quias gentium salutis
in virgine erit et fiet nobis hoc Verbum palpabile.

(Baldini.)

Gignetur Dominus universi gentium salus in virgine erit et fiet nobis hoc
verbum palpabile (sic).

(Casa Cavassa)

B: Always LIBICA.

Ecce veniet dies et illuminabit dominus condempsa (sic) tenebrarum, / et
solvetur nexus synagoge. / Et desinent labia hominum et videbunt regem
viventium. Et tenebit illum in gremio virgo domina gentium / et regnabit in
misericordia / et uterus matris eius erit statera cunctorum. (sic)

(Revello MS.)

*Behold! The day will come when God will pierce the dense gloom with light and break the bond, Oh Synagogue, and the lips of men shall be shut and they will see the living King. He will be held in a virgin's lap, the Queen of all mankind and he will reign in mercy and his mother's womb shall be the measure of all things.*⁴¹⁴

C: Always DELPHICA.

Nascetur propheta absque matris coytu (sic) ex virgine eius.

(Revello MS.)

He will be born a prophet from a mother conceiving without coitus, from a virgin.

D: Always CIMMERIAN:

In prima facie virginis ascendit puella quaedam necans gladiis: vastans gentes Egypti et ex pulchra facie. Prolixa capillis sedés super sedem stratam nutrit puerum dans ei ad comedendum lac proprium.

(Edinburgh MS.)

In the first appearance of the Virgin, this maiden ascends killing with swords: laying waste the people of Egypt with her beautiful glance. With an abundance of hair, sitting upon a couch, she nourishes her son, giving him ^{his} own milk to eat.

Another Version:

In prima facie virginis ascendet puella (reference to swords and killing the people of Egypt with her beautiful glance is entirely absent from the Revello

⁴¹⁴ 'Measure', literally, 'balance' or 'yoke-pole'.

manuscript) facie pulcra, capillis prolissa, sedens super sedem stratam puerum nutriens, dans ei ad comedendum ius proprium, idest lac de cello missum.

(Revello MS.)

In the first appearance of the Virgin, this maiden ascends, with a beautiful face, an abundance of hair, sitting upon a couch, she nourishes her son, giving him with pleasure, his own drink, that is giving the milk of Heaven.

The ideas concerning Egypt are a partial rendering or version of Lactantius *Div.Inst.* VII. 513, but that oracle. does not mention the Virgin in any part of it. It reads:

Egypt, first of all, the foolishly superstitious, will pay the penalty and will be covered with blood as with a river. Then the sword will plough through the whole world, moving everywhere, and cutting down all the harvest.

This is not a Sibylline oracle but refers to the Sibylline Oracles, 5.54 ff; 77-85 and 180. This implies that the compiler working for the Orsini Fresco may have wittingly or unwittingly inserted portions of Lactantius's commentary into the mouth of the Sibyl. The part chosen echoes the obnoxious xenophobic tone of Quodvultus.

E: Orsini: ERYTHRAEAN, later, HELLESPONTINE.

De excelso celorum habitaculo prospexit Deus humiles suos, / et nascetur in diebus novissimis de virgine hebrea in cunabulis terre.⁴¹⁵

(Revello MS. and Barbieri woodcuts and at Saluzzo: Casa Cavassa with slight variations in spelling.)

From the high habitation of Heaven, God has looked down on his humble (servants) and he shall be born in these latest days of a Hebrew Virgin in the cradle of the Earth.

⁴¹⁵ I have not yet found the source of this quotation in Lactantius or elsewhere.

This quotation was identified as the ERYTHRAEAN in the Orsini palace and in all the early Sibyl cycles. However, in the Baldini engravings, it is attributed instead to the HELLESPONTINE Sibyl, even though the vernacular poem of the Erythraea in that series is clearly based on this Latin oracle. The vernacular poem of Baldini Hellespontine is, conversely, based on the canonical Orsini oracle for the Hellespontica: *Iesus christus nascetur de Casta*, (Jesus Christ born of the Pure One). What seems to have happened is that on the Baldini engravings the vernacular poems are based on the right canonical oracles but in the Latin oracles the Hellespontine takes the canonical Erythraean oracle and the Erythraean takes an oracle from the Rimini / Siena source material.

After the publication (1470s) and dissemination of these engravings we see this error of putting the Erythraean oracle in the mouth of the Hellespontine Sibyl multiplied in the following important Sibyl frescos and documents: Barbieri woodcuts (1481); the Revello MS. (1490s); Casa Cavassa: Saluzzo (1507); Tivoli (early 1500s); Rome; S. Maria del Popolo (1509).

Casa Cavassa follows the Baldini engravings in its choice of a new oracle for the Erythraean, (Q on the accompanying table). The Barbieri woodcuts and the Revello MS. also share a new, but different, oracle for the Erythraean (M on the accompanying table).

F: Always SAMIAN.

Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de paupercula, / et bestie terrarum adorabunt eum, / clamabunt et dicent: laudate eum in stellis celorum.

(Edinburgh MS.)

Behold, he who is rich will come to be born of a poor woman, and the wild beasts of the earth shall adore him and shall cry aloud, and say, 'Praise him in the Courts of Heaven'.

The Revello MS. is exactly the same except that it uses the words 'terre' instead of 'terrarum' and 'atriis' (courts), instead of 'stellis' (of stars, starry). This is almost certainly a

misreading and translates as ‘praise him in the courts of Heaven.’ The Olmouc MS. gives ‘*astris*’, (of stars, starry).

G: Always CUMAEAN:

Ultima cumei venit iam carminis aetas / Magnus ab integro seculorum nascitur
ordo. / Iam reddit et virgo, reddeunt saturna regna; / jam nova progenies e cello
dimittitur alto. / Tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum / desinet ac toto
surget gens aurea mundo, / casta fave Lucina: tuus iam regnat Apollo.

(Edinburgh MS. These are lines 5-10 of Virgil’s *Eclogue* IV The Revello MS. misses out the first line, i.e. Virgil’s line 5.)

*Now the last period of Cumaean song has come. The great succession of Ages is
born again from the beginning, / Now also, the Virgin returns, and the rule of
Saturn comes again, / Now a new progeny descends from high Heaven. / You,
Oh chaste Lucina, favour the Boy whose birth will end the first age of Iron and
raise a golden race through all the world: now your Apollo rules.*

H: HELLESPONTINE everywhere except on the Revello list(see E above)

Iesus christus nascetur de Casta.

(Edinburgh MS.)

Jesus Christ born of the Pure One.

The Olomouc MS. agrees with Edinburgh, except in the spelling of ‘Ihesus’. This quotation does not appear on the Revello list. The presumption is that it was missing from the source document for Revello and the scribe found another quotation as a substitute (see M below).

I: FRIGIA everywhere except on the single Sibyl visible at Lucerna. (1450-60), where this is assigned to the Delphic

Flagellabit deus potentes terre ex olimpo excelsus veniet et firmabitur concilium in celo et annunciabitur virgo in vallibus desertorum.

(Edinburgh MS.)

The Revello MS. misses out the word *terre*, which I take to mean *terrae*, ‘of the earth’ and the Olomouc MS. has only minor variants.)

Almighty God shall chastise the kings of the earth. From highest Heaven he will come, the Court of Heaven will judge and a virgin will be proclaimed in the desert valleys.

J: Always TIBURTINA

Nascetur Christus in Bethleem: et annunciabitur in Nazareth / regnante tauro pacifico fundatore quietis. / O felix illa mater cuius ubera illum lactabunt / Item nascetur Christus. In diebus illis / exurget mulier de stirpe hebreorum, nomine Maria, habens sponsum Joseph, / et procreabitur ex ea sine commestione viri de Spiritu Sancto filius Dey, nomine Ihesus, / et ipsa erit virgo in partu et post partum. / Qui ergo ex ea nascetur erit verus Deus et verus homo, / sicut omnes prophete predicaverunt, / et permanebit regnum eius in secula seculorum.

(Revello MS.)

The Edinburgh MS. only gives the first three lines, as does Olomouc.)

Christ shall be born in Bethlehem and he shall be announced in Nazareth, the peaceful Taurus reigning, founder of rest. Oh happy that mother whose breast shall suckle him. Thus Christ shall be born. In those days a woman shall spring from the root of the Hebrews, called Mary, espoused to Joseph, and from her will be born, without carnal knowledge of a man, by the Holy Spirit, the Son of God, called Jesus. And the same woman shall be a virgin at the time of the birth

and thereafter. That which is to be born from her shall therefore be true God and true man, thus all the prophets predict, and he shall reign forever and ever.

I have seen the suggestion that the source of this oracle is an Italic folk poem, but no evidence for this was adduced.

K: EUROPA everywhere except Valgrana where it is ascribed to the Erithraea. and S. M. del Popolo in Rome

Veniet ille et transibit colles et montes et lattices olympi silvarum, / regnabit in paupertate et dominabitur in silencio, / et egrediatur de utero virginis.⁴¹⁶

(Revello MS. Edinburgh varies only in the spelling of 'olimpi'; Olomouc excises 'silvarum'.)

He will come and will cross hills, mountains and valleys, Olympian forests. He will reign in poverty and will himself be governed remaining silent, being born of a virgin's womb.

L: AGRIPPA or EGYPTA

Invisibile verbum palpabitur, / et germinabit ut radix, *siccabitur ut folium / et non apparebit venustas eius. / Circumdabitur alvus maternus et flebit Deus letitia sempiterna, / et ab hominibus conculcabitur. / Nascetur ex matre ut Deus et conversabitur ut peccator.

(Revello MS.)

The invisible word will be made palpable flesh and though he will spring as from the root, he will be withered like a leaf and will not appear beautiful. He will be confined by his mother's womb. God, the eternal joy, will weep and will

⁴¹⁶ This could be a scribal error, especially if the source manuscript used shortened forms as, for example, ĒŕPā .

be despised of men. He will be born from his mother as God, that the sinner may be converted.

The first phrase in this oracle is the last phrase of the oracle of the Sibylla Persica. Olomouc has no significant difference. The Edinburgh manuscript reads:

**Sibilla egiptia annorum triginta / “Invisibile verbum palpabitur, et /
germinabit ut radix, et seccabitur / ut folium: et non apparebit vetustas
eius / et circumdabitur alius maternus et flebit / Deus in letitia sempiterna:
et ab hominibus / Conculcabitur: et. nascetur ex matre / ut Deus et
conversabitur ut pec / -cator.”**

AGRIPPA is sometimes rendered as ‘Aegypta’, perhaps by scribal error. In the Edinburgh manuscript she is called, *Sibilla egiptia*, and at Piani Imperia the red-letter name reads *egiptis*. This does not appear to mean the Libica, who appears elsewhere in the Piani cycle. This seems to be another mis-reading of the source manuscript, which fits with a pattern of such errors in Piani. (See section on Piani) There is no such Sibyl as the Egyptis in Varro or Lactantius. Agrippa is a very late invention. Together with the Sibylla Europa she is one of the two additions to the Varronian list of ten, to balance the number of prophets (12) in any cycle containing both Sibyls and prophets.

M: ERITHRAEA only on the Revello manuscript and the Barbieri woodcuts (1481). (See E above.)

**In ultima etate humiliabitur Deus, / humanabitur proles divina, uniatur
divinitas humanitati. / Jacebit in feno agnus, et puelari officio educabitur
Deus et homo. / Signa precedent, aput Appellas.**

(Revello MS.)

This is the only heterodox quotation on the Revello list. It does not appear on any of the wall paintings that I have seen. The Revello copyist and / or Barbieri may have been working from a damaged or incomplete source and have filled a gap.)

In the last Age, God will be humbled, the Divine offspring will become human, uniting Divinity and humanity. The Lamb shall lie in the hay, and with maidenly kindness God and man shall be reared. This sign (oracle?) precedes (these events) in the time of Apellus.

THE TWO HETERODOX QUOTATIONS IN THE QUARTET OF SIBYLS IN GENOA 1451

This is not a proper Sibyl cycle. There are only four in the converging four sections of roof vaulting. No serious attempt is made here to convey a proper ‘traditional’ cycle of ten or twelve Sibyls. These four are balanced by a seemingly arbitrary selection of four prophets. There is no space for larger numbers in this loggia. The group of four Sibyls has two heterodox quotations, done by a German, not an Italian, artist. He may also have been the iconographer and taken his text not from other Sibyl series but perhaps from a drama source in German. I know of no German painted Sibyl cycles whatever at this date. The form is Italian. The artist was perhaps asked to paint four Sibyls by the commissioning monks. The divergence is rare and therefore very interesting.

N: CUMANA:

?In rob (?)– nus cust pio mare puella.....hoc alias formas praecesserit omnes.

(Source: Genoa. Parts of this oracle are obliterated, the paint being faded.)

O: TIBURTINA:

Nas—tet (?l)ps(?e) h—no lucem ripet-erit at cun(e/c)ta (ill)ustr?ru(?m) caelestia tecta
sub--- -----.

(Source: Genoa. Parts of this oracle are obliterated, the paint being faded.)

THE ALTERNATIVE LIST OF QUOTATIONS USED FOR CARVED MARBLE SIBYLS FOUND AT RAVENNA AND SIENA

P: SIENA: DELPHIC:

Ipsum tuum cognosce Deum qui dei filius est

Know thy God Himself, who is the Son of God. (Siena Delphic)

Q: SIENA AND AT RIMINI AS A SPLIT QUOTATION: SIENA CUMEA:

**Et mortus fatum finiet, trium dierum somno suscepto tunc a mortis
regressus, in lucem veniet primum resurrectionis initium ostendens.**

(The picture shows her mad and with hair streaming. This is the quotation in correct order as it appears in Lactantius.)

*He shall accomplish the fate of death, having undergone a sleep of three days.
Then being returned from the dead, he shall come into the light, showing the
first beginning of the resurrection.*

(Source: Lactantius: *Div.Inst.* IV ix 297-98.)

RIMINI: a split quotation:

RIGHT HAND PILLAR: SIBYL NUMBER 10:

Tribus diebus somno suscepto.

Having undergone a sleep of three days.

These are the last four words of a much longer quotation on the wall at Rimini. This is odd because they are the first words of a Lactantius vaticination, see above. This means that they have been tacked directly on to the end of another Lactantius quotation without the break being properly observed, although it is possible to read the passages in such a way that Lactantius is implying that this is a continuous vaticination. Perhaps the source manuscript from which the designer was working had this as a continuous quotation. This would explain the 'split quotations' at Siena where a single Sibyl speaks at Rimini but her words are

distributed to two different Sibyls on the Siena floor. The Siena cycle was constructed after a properly edited edition of Lactantius was printed at Subiaco.

RIGHT HAND PILLAR: SIBYL NUMBER 9

(LIBYAN? She has Libyan's traditional head wreath.)

**Et tunc ab inferis regressus ad lucem veniet primus resurrectionis
principio revocatis ostenso**

*And then, having returned from Hell, he shall be the first to come to the light,
showing the beginning of Resurrection.*

(Lactantius: *Div.Inst.* IV.ixx p. 297-98.)

R: SIENA PERSIAN:

**Panibus solum quinque et piscibus duobus hominum millia in foeno
quinque milia satiabit reliquias tollens XII cophinos implebit in spem
multorum.**

*With only five loaves and two fishes He will satisfy the hunger of five thousand
men on the grass. Taking up the remains he will fill twelve baskets for the hope
of many.*

S: SIENA AND RIMINI:

SIENA SAMIA:

**Tu enim stulta Iudea, Deum tuum non cognovisti, lucentem mortalium
mentibus sed et spinis coronasti horridum que fel miscuisti.**

*You indubitably stupid Judea, have not recognised your own God, shining in the
minds of men, but you have both crowned Him with thorns and mixed nauseous
gall for him. (Siena Samia)*

RIMINI R. H. 8: DELPHICA

(She holds a horn, the attribute of the Delphic at Siena and in the Baldini engravings)
a paraphrase.

**Ipsa henim insipiens gens [tuum] deum non intellexisti ludentem
mortalium mentibus sed spini coronasti et horridum fel miscuisti.**

*Your own stupid race itself has not understood your God, playing / shining in
the minds of mortals but has crowned Him with thorns and mixed nauseous gall
for him.*⁴¹⁷

(Lactantius: *Div. Inst.* IV (xviii) 294)

T: SIENA PHRYGIAN.

**Tuba de caelo vocem luctosam emitet tartareum chaos stendet dehiscens
terra veniet ad tribunal dei reges omnes deus ipse iudicans pios simul et
impios tunc demum impios in ignem et tenebras mittet qui autem pietatem
tenet iteru vivent. Solus Deus sum et non est Deus alius.**

*The trumpet shall sound with a mournful voice from Heaven. Erupting earth
shall show Tartarean Chaos. All Kings shall come before the tribunal of God,
God himself judging the evil and the good at the same time. Then at last, He
will plunge the wicked into fire and darkness. But whosoever will hold fast to
righteousness shall live again. 'I only am God, there is no other God.'*

(Siena Phrygian)

Compare these words with Saint Augustine's Acrostic:

Sic pariter fontes torrentur fluminaque igni

Et tuba tunc sonitum tristem demittet ab alto

⁴¹⁷ In view of the parallel with the Siena quotation, I think that the 'd' in *ludentem* is a mistake and that this should really read *lucentem*, which makes much more sense.

Orbe gemens facinus miserum variosque labores

Tartareumque chos monstrabit terra dehiscens

Et coram hic domino reges sistentur ad unum

Decidet et celo ignis et sulphris amnis.

(St Augustine, *City of God*, Book XVIII, Ch. 23, The Erithraean Sibyl's Acrostic, incorporated into the Rite of the Sibyl, celebrated at Christmas and Easter in the Mediaeval Church.)

U: SIENA AND AS A SPLIT QUOTATION AT RIMINI:

SIENA HELLESPONTINE:

In cibum fel, in sitim acetum dederunt hanc inhospitalitatis monstrabunt mensam; templi vero scindetur velum et medio die nox erit tenebrosa tribus horis.

For food gall, in his thirst they gave him vinegar, they will show forth this inhospitable table. The veil of the Temple shall indeed be rent and at mid-day there shall be dark night for three hours.

RIMINI a split quotation:

RIGHT HAND PILLAR: SIBYL NUMBER 6:

Ad cibum [autem fel] et ad sitim acetumque dederunt inhospitalitatis hanc monstrabunt mensam.

For food gall, and in his thirst they gave him vinegar they will show forth this inhospitable table.

(Lactantius: *Div.Inst.* IV xviii pp. 293-4.) This is the prophecy that immediately precedes Sibyl 10 below. There is no prophecy intervening, only Lactantius's explicatory text.

RIGHT HAND PILLAR: SIBYL NUMBER 10:

**Templi vero velum scindetur et medio die nox erit atra nimis in tribus horis
et morte morietur tribus diebus somno suscepto.**

*The veil of the Temple shall be rent, and mid-day will be night with darkness,
exceeding great, for three hours...*

(The next part of the quotation is found in the next Sibylline utterance in the same chapter, three paragraphs later, ‘and the Sibyl, too, said’. This suggests the designer may have been working from a manuscript which only contained the Sibyl’s words written in continuous prose, and omitting Lactantius’s commentary.)

*And death having been undergone, he shall sleep the sleep of death for three
days.*

(Lactantius: *Div.Inst.* IV.ixx pp. 296-7.)

V: SIENA AND AS A SPLIT QUOTATION AT RIMINI:

SIENA LIBYAN again, the compilers of the floor at Siena combine two Sibyl prophecies adjacent in Lactantius but separated by commentary.

**Colaphos accipiens tacebit dabit in verbera innocens dorsum. In manus
iniquas veniet, Dabunt deo alapas manibus incestis.**

(Lactantius: IV(xviii)293, ‘The Sibyl’ un-named.)

Miserabilis et ignominiosus. Miserabilibus spem praebebit.

(Lactantius: *Div. Inst.* IV xvi p. 287, ‘The Sibyl’ unnamed.)

*Receiving clouts he will be silent, to blows he will give his innocent back. He
shall come into wicked hands. They will give God stripes, with corrupted hands.
He, miserable and in ignominy, will give hope to the miserable.*

RIMINI a split quotation: A single continuous quotation in Lactantius is split between two Sibyls.

LEFT HAND PILLAR SIBYL 2 a paraphrase:

**In manus infidelium postea veniet dabunt autem manibus incestis et
impurato ore expuent.**

*At the last, he shall come into the hands of the unfaithful and then they shall lay
filthy and impure hands on him and spit on him.*

(Lactantius *Div.Inst.* IV xviii p. 293)

RIGHT HAND PILLAR SIBYL 7:

**dabit vero ad verbera simpliciter sanctum dorsum et collaphos accipiens
tacebit.**

*Truly, he will simply give his holy back to blows, and receiving wallops, he will
remain silent.*

(Lactantius: *Div.Inst.* IV xviii p. 293.)

W: RIMINI:

LEFT HAND PILLAR SIBYL NUMBER 1:

**Jugum nostre servitutis intollerabile super collum posi [tum to] llet leges
impias solvet vinculaque violenta.⁴¹⁸**

*Placing our intolerable yoke of slavery on his own neck he takes away unjust
laws and looses harsh fetters.*

(The last words of Chapter 18 of Lactantius *Div.Inst.*, p. 520.)

X: ROME: Santa Maria del Popolo.

Dei filius in carne veniet ut iudicet orbe.

⁴¹⁸ Sections of text, presumed to be on the scroll, are hidden as it winds behind her body. These are in brackets.

The Son of God will come to judge the earth.

Y: TIVOLI: Hospital Chapel:

SIBILLA ERITREA:

**SIC AIT: ECCE DEO GENITUS / CELSO DEMISSUS OLI(?P/M) / HEBREA PASTUS VIR / GINIS
UBERIBUS**

*Behold the son of God, sent down from on high, once fed from the breasts of a
Hebrew virgin.*

(This is completely heterodox.)

Z: TIVOLI: Hospital Chapel.

SIBILLA CUMANA:

The text is almost completely lost but some few letters can be described with difficulty.

These read either:

SIC AIT: ANGNU(?P/M) TEC OR ANGIU(?P/M) TEC.

Little can be said with certainty since it is so ruined by damp and faded, except that this does not seem to accord with anything in the canonical text. This supports the notion that the source manuscript, undoubtedly containing some canonical oracles, was damaged or curtailed in regard to a significant number of oracles and that other oracles were used here to supply the missing text.

APPENDIX: TABLE OF SIBYLLINE ORACLE TEXTS: THEIR LOCATION AND ATTRIBUTION

	1425-34	1439-40	1441-2	1450	1451	1454-5	1450-60	1463	1460s-70s	1470s	1470s	1477	1480-85	1481	1482-3	1486
QUOTATION	ORSINI ROME	SAN. VITO MOST DESTROYED	FLORENCE ST MARK'S 1 SIBYL	FERRARA CASA ROMEI VER	GENOVA ONLY 4	RIMINI*	LUSERNA 2 SURVIVE	ALBENGA	VAL. GRANO 4 SIBYLS 2 WITH NAME	BALDINI LATIN FLORENCE	BALDINI VERNACULAR FLORENCE.	VALPERGA 6 UNCOVERED	FLORENCE SASSETTI. CHAP 4 SIBS: 2 HET. 1 NO TEXT	BARBERI FLORENCE	SIENA	BAGOLINO
A	1PERS			1PER	1PER-			PER		PERp-	PERp	4 PER		7 PER-		
B	2.LIB			2LIB				LIB	LIB	LIBp-	LIBp			8 LIB		
C	3.DEL			3DEL						DELP-	DELP			9 DEL		
D	4.CIM			4X AN						CIMP-	CIMP			10 CIM-		
E	5.ERIT			5.X AN	2.ERI					HEL	ERITp			6 HEL	ERIT	
F	6.SAM			6.SAM						SAM	LIBERO	2 SAM		4 SAM		
G	7CUM A			7.CUM				ANO N		CUM-	CUMP			5 CU	CUM	
H	8HEL			8.X AN							HEL	6 HEL				
I	9PHIRI G			9.FRIG			DEL			FRI-	FRIG			1 PHR		
J	10.TIB			10.TIB			ANON			TIB-	TIB	3 TIB		11TIB-	TIB-	
K	11EUR			11EUR					ERIT	EUR-	EUR	1EUR		2 EUR		
L	12 AGR	9.AGR		12AGR						AGR	AGR		ANON	12AG		
M														3 ERI		
N					3CUMA											
O					4.TIB											
P															DEL	
Q			ERIT			9LIBp-&10sq				ERIT					CIM	
R															PERS	
S						8DELP.									SAM	
T															PHR	
U						CUMA 6 & 10sq									HEL	
V						2ERIp-7p-									LIB	
W:						1										
X-Z																

	1488	1490s	1498	1500	1501	1507	1508 ©	1509	1514
	PIANI IMPERIA	REVELLO LIST.	BIZ ZOZ ZERO	ROMES. M. SOPRA. MINERVA 4 SIBS	SPELLO 4 SIBS ONLY	SALUZZO. CASA CAVASA.	TIVOLI ¹	ROMES. M. DEL POPOLO 4 SIBS	ROMES. M. D PACE 4 SIBS.
A PE ²	2?PE	2.PERS	X			1.PERPARA	7 PER -	PER	
B LIB		3.LIB	LIB-			2.LIBPARA	8 LIB -		
C DE		4.DEL	X	DEL PARA		3.DELPARA	9 DEL		
D CI		6.CIM	CIM-			4.CIMPARA			
E ER		5.HEL	ERI-		ERI	8.HEL-	10 HEL	HEL ³	
F SA	6 SAM	11SAM	SA-P		SAM	6.SAMPARA	4 SAM		
G CU	12?X	12CUM	CU-	CUM -		7.CUM-	3 X /HET		ANON
H HE	1HEL		X	HEL					
I FRI		10FRIG	X			9.FRIG-	11FRIG-		
J TIB	TIB	1.TIB	ANON.	TIB	TIB-	10.TIB-	2 TIB-/+		
K EU	8EUR	8.EUR	X		EU P	12.EUR	12 EU -		
L AG	7AG/E	7.AGR	X			11.AGR?	1 AG -	DEL	
M		9.ERIT							
N-P									
Q						5.ERIT			
R-W									
X								CIM	
Y							ERIT		
Z		S					CUM		

LEGEND:

Anon or An. = Obliterated name.

Ero = an error or slip made by a scribe, translator or printer, not a deliberate change in attribution of oracle to Sibyl. See text on Baldini Samia.

h or HET = heterodox, i.e. different from any other quotation in any of the other cycles. Nothing resembles it anywhere.

p or para = paraphrase.

sq = Split Quotation: i.e. a quotation that is whole in the mouth of a single sibyl elsewhere is split between two in this instance.

ver or v = vernacular.

X = Obliterated text

- = Shortened form with some sentences, phrases or words missing.

+ = Extra phrases inserted that are not found elsewhere and not part of the basic text.

? = Much obliterated quotation with some words recognisable

NOTES:

¹ There are no names on the Casa Romei Sibyls: these are obliterated. However, the order of quotations is exactly that of the Orsini Sibyls so there is a *presumption* that the attributions were also the same.

***Rimini:** there are no names on the Rimini Sibyls. It seems they were never carved. Such names as I dare to suggest are based on dress conventions established by repeated appearance in other cycles There are three Sibyls 3, 4, and 5 by my numbering, on the bottom row of the left hand pillar (looking from the nave) who have no oracles. It seems the oracles were never inserted in their scrolls, surely a sign that they were left unfinished by the letter sculptor. Thus, whilst there are ten Sibyls at Rimini, in other respects fully finished, it has not been possible to insert them into the table.

¹ At Tivoli Sibyls 2, 3, 5 and 6, Tiburtina, Cumana, Eritrea and Cumea, are wholly or substantially different from the canonical text. This marks a lapsing of the tradition. At this time Sibyl Cycles begin to be produced as decorative motifs altogether without text.

² The usual or expected Sibyl names are indicated in the first column on this page for convenience.

³ Very heavily paraphrased: *In ultima etate*, for, *diebus novissimis*, etc.

APPENDIX 3

FACSIMILE, TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION OF THE EDINBURGH MANUSCRIPT

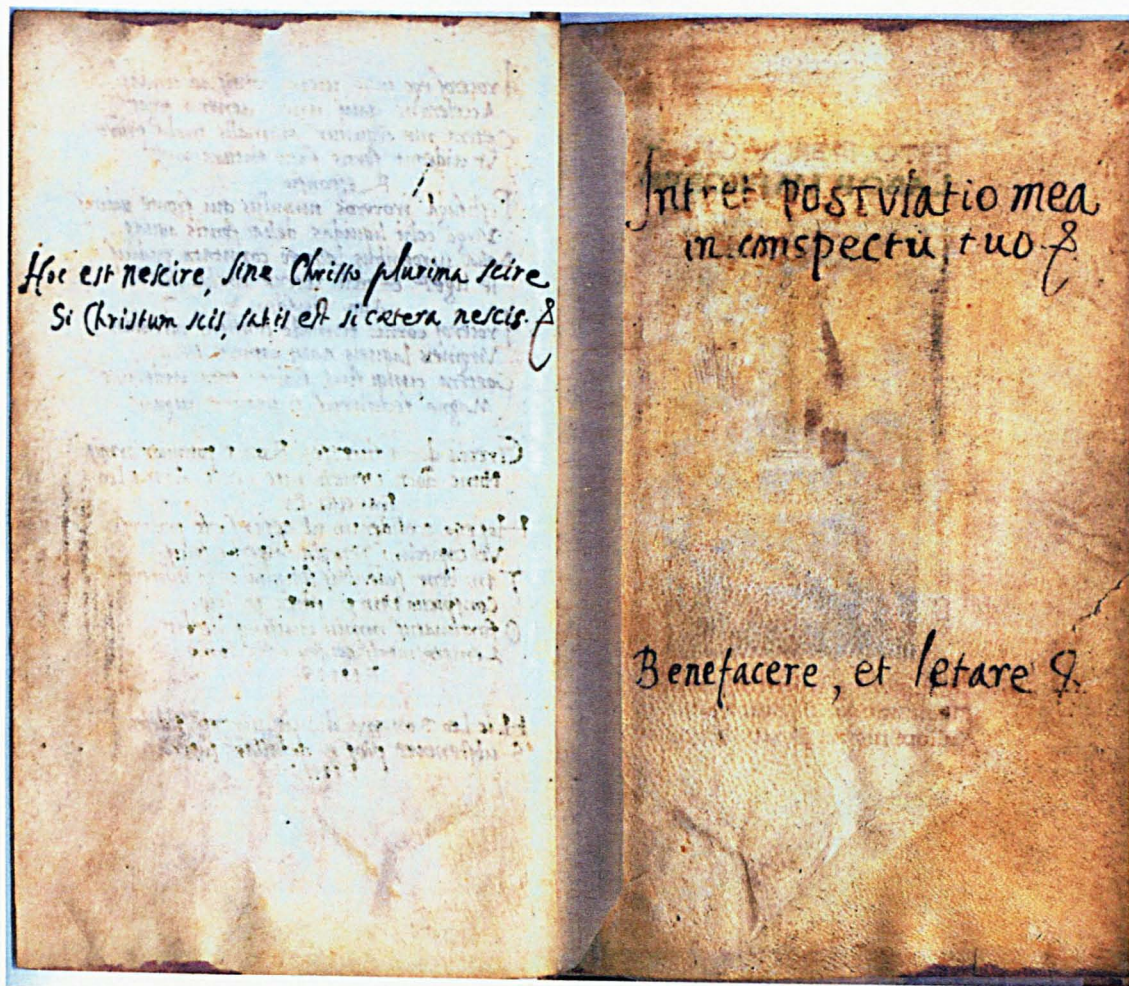


Edinburgh Codex: sketch of female martial figure, possibly as a design for Pallas painted later in the codex, revealed by lifting the end paper previously stuck to the inner surface of the hard front cover, The sketch was used as a lining over which another page was fixed



Edinburgh Codex: frontispiece with what appears to be a child's writing and painting of (his own?) stemma.
Some of the writing on the verso shows through the vellum. Probably this page was originally left blank.

Edinburgh Codex: Facing page and 1 recto both probably originally blank.



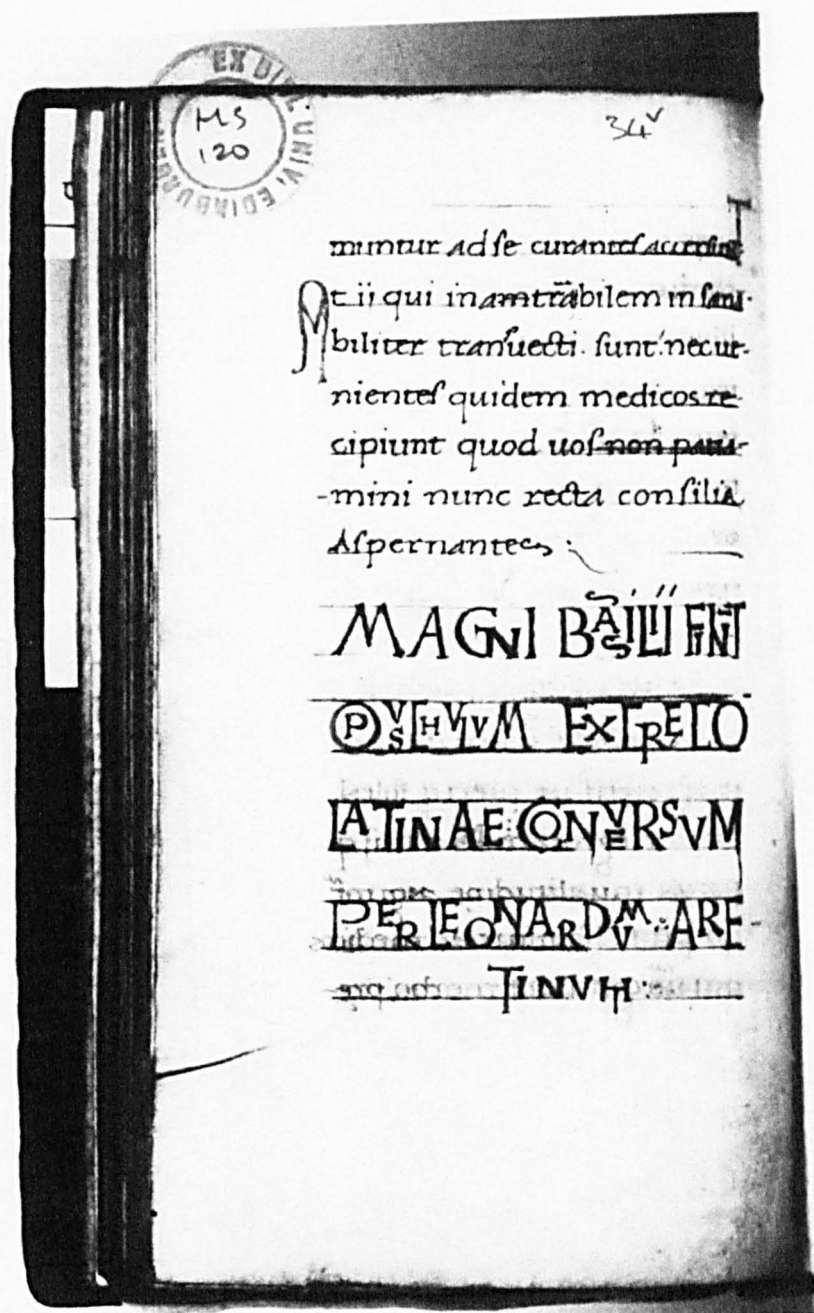


Mundus est Campus diaboli.
Temptationum palestra.
officina malorum.
fabrica vitiorum.
Sentina Intemperantiarum.
falax vischum.
Tristis Letitia.
falsum gaudium.
Exultatio in avariis.
Area tribulationum.
lacus miseriarum.
Naufragium virtutum.
maiorum famel.
incentium scelerum.
iter cecum.
Traznes salebrosus. Saltus
insidiarum. Carceri horridus.
Scena iniquitatum. Arena.
laboy. Teatrum in honestatū
Spectaculū delictoy. Horribile
precipitium. domus amse-
ratum. Mare turbidum.
Vallis calamitatum. Frum-
narū domiciliū. Speculum
vanitatis. Corruptio pietatū
Laqueus animarū. Pares



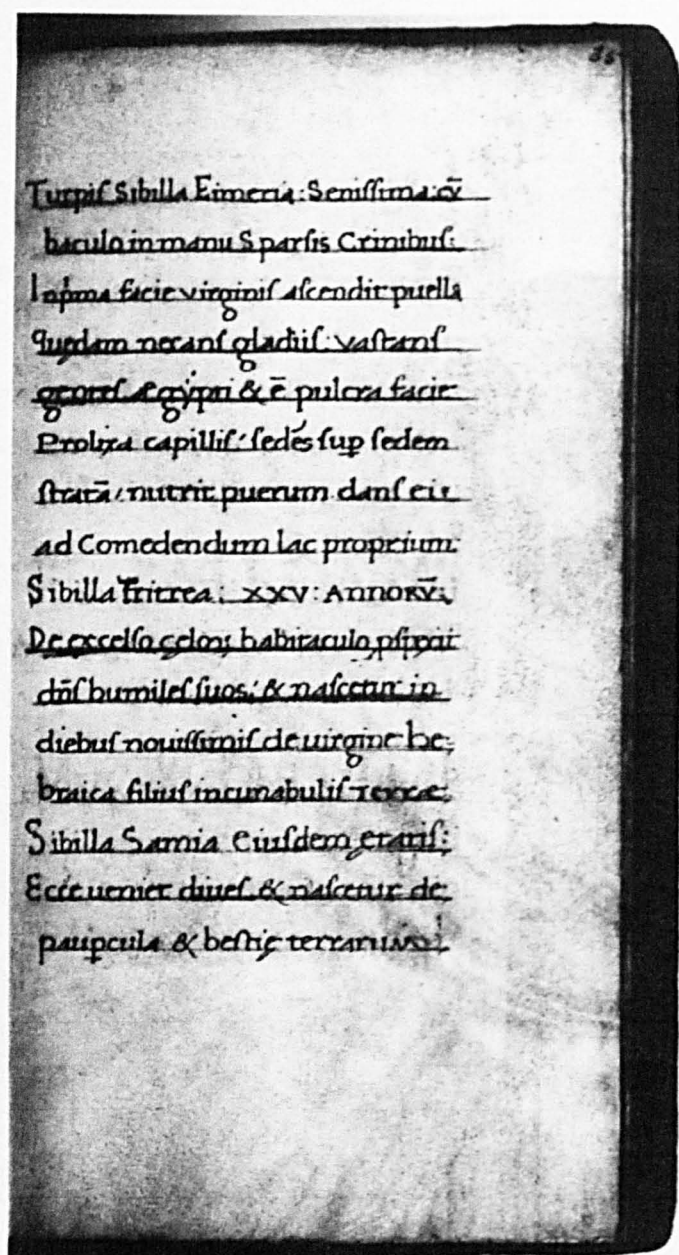
Edinburgh Codex: Title page of the translation of St. Basil the Great's address to young men on the manner in which Christians are to read Classical (Pagan) Literature, *Ad Adulescentes*. At the head of the page is a dedication by its translator, Leonardo Aretino, (c. 1370-1444) better known by his cognomen, Leonardo Bruni, to *Colutium Florentinum*, i.e. Colutio Salutati (1331-1406), Chancellor of Florence.

The crest painted at the bottom is probably a later addition as it is less well executed, in a different and looser style and transgresses the page layout. Borland identifies it as the crest of Alphonso the fifth of Spain and first of Naples, the founder of the Aragonese Library in Naples, ruling Naples from 1442-58.



Edinburgh Codex 34 verso: last page of the translation from the Greek of St Basil the Great by Leonardo Aretino, better known as Leonardo Bruni

THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONSTITUTE THE TEXT OF THE LIST OF
SIBYLS AND THEIR ORACLES



Edinburgh Codex 35 recto

APPENDIX 3: FACSIMILE, TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION OF THE EDINBURGH MANUSCRIPT

Edinburgh University Library, MS. 120 [previously Laing III 141 misc. XV sec., see
35r-37r.]⁴¹⁹

Turpis Sibilla Eimeria:	<i>Ugly Cimmerian Sibyl: Very old with</i>
Senissima: cum	
baculo in manu. Sparsis	<i>stick in hand. With sparse hair.</i>
Crinibus:	
'In prima facie virginis	<i>'At the first appearance of the Virgin,</i>
ascendit puella	<i>this maiden ascends</i>
quaedam necans gladiis	<i>killing with swords: laying waste</i>
vastans	
gentes egypti et ex pulcra	<i>the people of Egypt and with her</i>
facie	<i>beautiful face</i>
Prolixa capillis sedens super	<i>and an abundance of hair, sitting upon a</i>
sedem	<i>cloth draped couch,</i>
stratam nutrit puerum dans	<i>she nourishes her son,</i>
ei	
ad comedendum lac	<i>giving him his proper milk to eat.'</i>
proprium.'	

Sibilla Eritrea: xxv Annorum:	<i>Erithraean Sibyl: twenty-five years old:</i>
'De excelso celorum habitaculo prospexit	<i>'From the high habitation of Heaven,</i>
	<i>God has looked down</i>
deus humiles suos, et nascetur in	<i>on his humble (servants) and a son shall</i>
	<i>be born in</i>

⁴¹⁹ The rendering is semi-diplomatic. I have modernised punctuation, in order to clarify the text, making clear the distinction between the description of the Sibyl and her oracle.

diebus novissimis de virgine hebraica

these latest days of a Hebrew Virgin

in cunabulis terrae.'

in the cradle of the Earth.'

Sibilla Samia eiusdem aetatis:

Samian Sibyl the same age:

'Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de

*'Behold, he who is rich will come to be
born*

paupercula, et bestie terrarum

*of a poor woman, and the wild beasts of
the earth*

adorabunt eum, et clamabunt et

shall adore him and shall cry aloud, and

dicent: laudate eum in stellis celorum.'

say, 'Praise to the starry Heavens.'

Sibilla Cumana cum baculo senissima.

*The Sibyl of Cumae with a stick, very
old:*

'Ultima cumei venit iam carminis aetas

*'Now the last period of Cumaean song
has come.*

**Magnusq ab integro seculorum nascitur
ordo.**⁴²⁰

*The great succession of Ages is born
again from the beginning,*

**Iam reddit et virgo, redeunt saturnia
regna;**

*Now also, the Virgin returns, and the
rule of Saturn comes again;*

Iam nova, progenies caelo dimittitur alto.'

*Now a new progeny descends from high
Heaven.'*

(These are lines 5-7 of Virgil's *Eclogue IV*.)

⁴²⁰ The *q* here is a scribal error (See Virgil) appearing in no other manuscript description and does not signify, '*Magnusque*'.

adorabunt eum & clamabunt &
dicent. Laudate eū in stellis cęlorū.
Sibilla Cumana cū baculo senescens
Vltima cumei uerū iā carminis erat.
Magnusq; ab integro seclorū nascit̃ ordo
Iam redit & uirgo redeūit sātina regna
Iam noua p̃genies cęlo dimittit̃ alto.
Sibilla hellespontica. xv. ANNORū.
Iesū christus nascet̃ de Casta.
Sibilla delphica uetustissima cū baculo
Nasci debere prophētā absq; maris
coitu & matre uirgine.
Sibilla phrygia annorū quinquaginta.
Flagellabat deus potentes terre. Et
olimpo excelsus ueniet & firmabit̃
consilium in cęlo: & annūtiabitur.

Sibilla helespontica xv ANNORUM.

Hellespontine Sibyl fifteen years old.

‘Iesus christus nascetur de Casta.’

‘Jesus Christ born of the Pure One.’

Sibilla delphica vetustissima cum bacula

Delphic Sibyl extremely old with a stick

‘Nasci debere prophetam absque maris

*‘I have been born to be a prophet
without marital*

coitu et matre virgine.’

coitus and from a virgin mother.’

Sibilla phrygia annorum quinquaginta.

Phrygian Sibyl: fifty years old.

‘Flagellabit deus potentes terre: ex

*‘Almighty God shall chastise the kings of
the earth. From*

olimpo excelsus veniet et firmabitur

highest Heaven he will come,

concilium in cello: et annunciabitur

the Court of Heaven will judge and

virgo in vallibus desertorum.’

*a virgin will be proclaimed in the desert
valleys.’*

Sibilla Tiburtina vidua, annorum XL.

Tiburtine Sibyl: widow forty years old.

**‘Nascetur christus in Bethleem: et
annunciabitur in Nazareth**

*‘Christ shall be born in Bethlehem and
he shall be proclaimed in Nazareth,*

regnante tauro pacifico fundatore quietis.

*the peaceful Taurus reigning, founder of
rest, being in the ascendant.*

**O felix illa mater cuius ubera illum
lactabunt.’**

*Oh happy mother whose breast shall
suckle him.’*

36^r 36
 uirgo in uallibus desertorum
 Sibilla tiburtina vidua a. n. 9. xl.
 Nascetur christus in bethleem &
 annuntiabitur in nazareth regem
 tauro pacifico fundatore gentis
 o foelix illa mater cuius uiscera
 illum lactabunt
 Sibilla Europa x. xv. annorum
 Venit ille & transibit colles & mo-
 tes & laticeis olympi & regnabit
 in paupertate & dñabitur i silentio
 & egredietur de utero uir-
 ginis Sibilla persea a. n. 9. xxi.
 ecce bestia concubabitur & gignet
 dñs in ortem terrarum & in omni
 uirginis erit salus gentium &

Sibilla europa XXV annorum.

Sibilla Europa, twenty-five years old.

‘Veniet ille et transibit colles et mon

*‘He will come and will cross valleys,
mountains*

tes et lattices olympi regnabit

and Olympian heights. He will reign

in paupertate et dominabitur in silen

*in poverty and will himself be governed
remaining silent,*

tio et egredietur de utero vir

being born of a virgin’s womb.’

ginis.’ Sibilla Persica anorum (? xxx)⁴²¹

Sibilla Persica aged (? Thirty)

‘Ecce bestia conculcabitur et gignetur⁴²²

*‘Behold, He will be trodden down by the
beasts, even though he will be born*

**dominus in orbem terrarum. Et in
gremium**

*Lord of all the kingdoms of the world.
And in the lap*

virginis erit salus gentium ex

*of a virgin, he will be the saviour of
mankind. From*

pedes eius in valitudine hominum.’

*his feet shall come the health of
mankind.’*

Sibilla libica Saeraena xxv annorum.⁴²³

*Sibilla Libica, a black woman of twenty-
five years.*

⁴²¹ Manuscript unclear.

⁴²² Other manuscripts read *conculaberis*.

⁴²³ C.f. *Saracena*.

pdes eius in ualitudine hominum
 Sibilla libica Særena: xxv. annor
 Ecce ueniet dies et illuminabit dñs
 condensa tenebrarum. & soluet
 nexus synagoga. & definent labi
 hominum: & uidebunt regni
 uentium: & tenebit illum i gre
 mio. uirgo & domina gentium:
 & uirtus eius erit statena dñstor
 Sibilla egiptia annor Tringta
 Inuisibile uerbum palpabitur. et
 germinabit ut radix: & secabunt
 ut foliū: & n̄ apparebit uetustas
 & circūdabit alius p̄na & flebit
 dñs in letitia sempiterna: & ab homin
 concubabitur: & nascet ex matre

'Ecce veniet dies et illuminabit dominus	<i>'Behold! The day will come when God will pierce</i>
condensa (sic) tenebrarum, et solvetur	<i>the dense gloom with light and break</i>
nexus synagoge et desinent labia	<i>the bond, Oh Synagogue, and the lips of men shall be shut</i>
hominum et videbunt regem viventium:	<i>and they will see the living King, dwelling:</i>
et tenebit illum in gremio virgo domina gentium	<i>in a virgin's womb who is the Queen of all mankind</i>
et virtus eius erit statera cunctorum.'	<i>and his virtue shall be the measure of all things. ⁴²⁴</i>

Sibilla egiptia annorum triginta	<i>The Egyptian Sibyl, aged thirty:</i>
'Invisibile verbum palpabitur, et	<i>'The invisible word will be made palpable flesh and</i>
germinabit ut radix, et seccabitur	<i>though he will spring as from the root, he will be withered</i>
ut folium: et non apparebit vetustas eius ⁴²⁵	<i>like a leaf and will not appear old.</i>
et circumdabitur alius maternus et flebit	<i>He will be confined by his mother's womb.</i>

⁴²⁴ 'Measure' literally, 'balance' or 'yoke-pole'.

⁴²⁵ Other manuscripts have *venustas* not *vetustas* and the alternative version, 'beautiful' instead of 'old' appears to make more sense, as a contrast to 'withered'. This is probably a scribal error.

37^r
ut deus & conuersabimur ut po
caroy;

Del Paradiſo ſe dicit et
Acquiri potest, Imaginari non potest. p

Curis dique viuit, qui religioſe beneque viuit p

ut pensim, sine sensu, ſera ſenectus p

Ma ſenectus ultima est Aetas

Curis enim ſenescimus. S. C.

36

Deus in letitia sempiterna: et ab hominibus	<i>God, the eternal joy, will weep and will</i>
	<i>be despised of men.</i>
Conculcabitur: et. nascetur ex matre	<i>He will be born from his mother</i>
ut Deus et conversabitur ut peccator.'	<i>as God, that the sinner may be</i>
	<i>converted.'</i>

unde quidem dicunt q. p. m. u.
 ē pronomen secunda nomina
 tertium uō agnomen: s. p. n. o. m.
 Facilius erat unus conf. qui
 prebat commendationem dāne
 totum & iniuriā p. factus
 totum romano et erat an.
 iuratio pacis et quēte s. m.
 ordinamentum Senatus ex
 populo Romano i.

huius dominatur animo suo
 Fortior est sagittatore Urbinus

Respic in me. & m. i. e. r. e. m. e.
 qui huius. et Puerus tuus. S.

¹ ² ³ ⁴ ⁵ ⁶ ⁷ ⁸ ⁹ ¹⁰ ¹¹ ¹² ¹³ ¹⁴ ¹⁵ ¹⁶ ¹⁷ ¹⁸ ¹⁹ ²⁰ ²¹ ²² ²³ ²⁴ ²⁵ ²⁶ ²⁷ ²⁸ ²⁹ ³⁰ ³¹ ³² ³³ ³⁴ ³⁵ ³⁶ ³⁷ ³⁸ ³⁹ ⁴⁰ ⁴¹ ⁴² ⁴³ ⁴⁴ ⁴⁵ ⁴⁶ ⁴⁷ ⁴⁸ ⁴⁹ ⁵⁰ ⁵¹ ⁵² ⁵³ ⁵⁴ ⁵⁵ ⁵⁶ ⁵⁷ ⁵⁸ ⁵⁹ ⁶⁰ ⁶¹ ⁶² ⁶³ ⁶⁴ ⁶⁵ ⁶⁶ ⁶⁷ ⁶⁸ ⁶⁹ ⁷⁰ ⁷¹ ⁷² ⁷³ ⁷⁴ ⁷⁵ ⁷⁶ ⁷⁷ ⁷⁸ ⁷⁹ ⁸⁰ ⁸¹ ⁸² ⁸³ ⁸⁴ ⁸⁵ ⁸⁶ ⁸⁷ ⁸⁸ ⁸⁹ ⁹⁰ ⁹¹ ⁹² ⁹³ ⁹⁴ ⁹⁵ ⁹⁶ ⁹⁷ ⁹⁸ ⁹⁹ ¹⁰⁰ ¹⁰¹ ¹⁰² ¹⁰³ ¹⁰⁴ ¹⁰⁵ ¹⁰⁶ ¹⁰⁷ ¹⁰⁸ ¹⁰⁹ ¹¹⁰ ¹¹¹ ¹¹² ¹¹³ ¹¹⁴ ¹¹⁵ ¹¹⁶ ¹¹⁷ ¹¹⁸ ¹¹⁹ ¹²⁰ ¹²¹ ¹²² ¹²³ ¹²⁴ ¹²⁵ ¹²⁶ ¹²⁷ ¹²⁸ ¹²⁹ ¹³⁰ ¹³¹ ¹³² ¹³³ ¹³⁴ ¹³⁵ ¹³⁶ ¹³⁷ ¹³⁸ ¹³⁹ ¹⁴⁰ ¹⁴¹ ¹⁴² ¹⁴³ ¹⁴⁴ ¹⁴⁵ ¹⁴⁶ ¹⁴⁷ ¹⁴⁸ ¹⁴⁹ ¹⁵⁰ ¹⁵¹ ¹⁵² ¹⁵³ ¹⁵⁴ ¹⁵⁵ ¹⁵⁶ ¹⁵⁷ ¹⁵⁸ ¹⁵⁹ ¹⁶⁰ ¹⁶¹ ¹⁶² ¹⁶³ ¹⁶⁴ ¹⁶⁵ ¹⁶⁶ ¹⁶⁷ ¹⁶⁸ ¹⁶⁹ ¹⁷⁰ ¹⁷¹ ¹⁷² ¹⁷³ ¹⁷⁴ ¹⁷⁵ ¹⁷⁶ ¹⁷⁷ ¹⁷⁸ ¹⁷⁹ ¹⁸⁰ ¹⁸¹ ¹⁸² ¹⁸³ ¹⁸⁴ ¹⁸⁵ ¹⁸⁶ ¹⁸⁷ ¹⁸⁸ ¹⁸⁹ ¹⁹⁰ ¹⁹¹ ¹⁹² ¹⁹³ ¹⁹⁴ ¹⁹⁵ ¹⁹⁶ ¹⁹⁷ ¹⁹⁸ ¹⁹⁹ ²⁰⁰ ²⁰¹ ²⁰² ²⁰³ ²⁰⁴ ²⁰⁵ ²⁰⁶ ²⁰⁷ ²⁰⁸ ²⁰⁹ ²¹⁰ ²¹¹ ²¹² ²¹³ ²¹⁴ ²¹⁵ ²¹⁶ ²¹⁷ ²¹⁸ ²¹⁹ ²²⁰ ²²¹ ²²² ²²³ ²²⁴ ²²⁵ ²²⁶ ²²⁷ ²²⁸ ²²⁹ ²³⁰ ²³¹ ²³² ²³³ ²³⁴ ²³⁵ ²³⁶ ²³⁷ ²³⁸ ²³⁹ ²⁴⁰ ²⁴¹ ²⁴² ²⁴³ ²⁴⁴ ²⁴⁵ ²⁴⁶ ²⁴⁷ ²⁴⁸ ²⁴⁹ ²⁵⁰ ²⁵¹ ²⁵² ²⁵³ ²⁵⁴ ²⁵⁵ ²⁵⁶ ²⁵⁷ ²⁵⁸ ²⁵⁹ ²⁶⁰ ²⁶¹ ²⁶² ²⁶³ ²⁶⁴ ²⁶⁵ ²⁶⁶ ²⁶⁷ ²⁶⁸ ²⁶⁹ ²⁷⁰ ²⁷¹ ²⁷² ²⁷³ ²⁷⁴ ²⁷⁵ ²⁷⁶ ²⁷⁷ ²⁷⁸ ²⁷⁹ ²⁸⁰ ²⁸¹ ²⁸² ²⁸³ ²⁸⁴ ²⁸⁵ ²⁸⁶ ²⁸⁷ ²⁸⁸ ²⁸⁹ ²⁹⁰ ²⁹¹ ²⁹² ²⁹³ ²⁹⁴ ²⁹⁵ ²⁹⁶ ²⁹⁷ ²⁹⁸ ²⁹⁹ ³⁰⁰ ³⁰¹ ³⁰² ³⁰³ ³⁰⁴ ³⁰⁵ ³⁰⁶ ³⁰⁷ ³⁰⁸ ³⁰⁹ ³¹⁰ ³¹¹ ³¹² ³¹³ ³¹⁴ ³¹⁵ ³¹⁶ ³¹⁷ ³¹⁸ ³¹⁹ ³²⁰ ³²¹ ³²² ³²³ ³²⁴ ³²⁵ ³²⁶ ³²⁷ ³²⁸ ³²⁹ ³³⁰ ³³¹ ³³² ³³³ ³³⁴ ³³⁵ ³³⁶ ³³⁷ ³³⁸ ³³⁹ ³⁴⁰ ³⁴¹ ³⁴² ³⁴³ ³⁴⁴ ³⁴⁵ ³⁴⁶ ³⁴⁷ ³⁴⁸ ³⁴⁹ ³⁵⁰ ³⁵¹ ³⁵² ³⁵³ ³⁵⁴ ³⁵⁵ ³⁵⁶ ³⁵⁷ ³⁵⁸ ³⁵⁹ ³⁶⁰ ³⁶¹ ³⁶² ³⁶³ ³⁶⁴ ³⁶⁵ ³⁶⁶ ³⁶⁷ ³⁶⁸ ³⁶⁹ ³⁷⁰ ³⁷¹ ³⁷² ³⁷³ ³⁷⁴ ³⁷⁵ ³⁷⁶ ³⁷⁷ ³⁷⁸ ³⁷⁹ ³⁸⁰ ³⁸¹ ³⁸² ³⁸³ ³⁸⁴ ³⁸⁵ ³⁸⁶ ³⁸⁷ ³⁸⁸ ³⁸⁹ ³⁹⁰ ³⁹¹ ³⁹² ³⁹³ ³⁹⁴ ³⁹⁵ ³⁹⁶ ³⁹⁷ ³⁹⁸ ³⁹⁹ ⁴⁰⁰ ⁴⁰¹ ⁴⁰² ⁴⁰³ ⁴⁰⁴ ⁴⁰⁵ ⁴⁰⁶ ⁴⁰⁷ ⁴⁰⁸ ⁴⁰⁹ ⁴¹⁰ ⁴¹¹ ⁴¹² ⁴¹³ ⁴¹⁴ ⁴¹⁵ ⁴¹⁶ ⁴¹⁷ ⁴¹⁸ ⁴¹⁹ ⁴²⁰ ⁴²¹ ⁴²² ⁴²³ ⁴²⁴ ⁴²⁵ ⁴²⁶ ⁴²⁷ ⁴²⁸ ⁴²⁹ ⁴³⁰ ⁴³¹ ⁴³² ⁴³³ ⁴³⁴ ⁴³⁵ ⁴³⁶ ⁴³⁷ ⁴³⁸ ⁴³⁹ ⁴⁴⁰ ⁴⁴¹ ⁴⁴² ⁴⁴³ ⁴⁴⁴ ⁴⁴⁵ ⁴⁴⁶ ⁴⁴⁷ ⁴⁴⁸ ⁴⁴⁹ ⁴⁵⁰ ⁴⁵¹ ⁴⁵² ⁴⁵³ ⁴⁵⁴ ⁴⁵⁵ ⁴⁵⁶ ⁴⁵⁷ ⁴⁵⁸ ⁴⁵⁹ ⁴⁶⁰ ⁴⁶¹ ⁴⁶² ⁴⁶³ ⁴⁶⁴ ⁴⁶⁵ ⁴⁶⁶ ^{467</}

Jun. Cito dat; 13. is. dat. 8.

od tace sit virtus

Eximia ē virtus prestare silentiū
At cont' gratius est cuius talia loq'

[illegible]

forma arpiez. v. buene

C'it ~~cello~~ cupiens aliena: famelicus antro
Ocupat occipio: p'ius aliena nophaga
Pellima fuerit: celens aliena cedendo:

Religionis opes nicaui lacrimis typis.
 In caribz opusculis economice facilius
 Typicus luxuriat, dñi fides educta
 sepulchris :

Ἰησοῦς Χριστός

ἀπομύνησ' ἐν αὐτῇ

ἁγίος ὁ θεός. ἁγίος
ἰσχυρός ἁγίος ἀθάνατος.

β. ληνσον ἡνῶς ὦ θεός
ὅτι παρὰ σοὶ ἐστὶ τὸ εἶπας
ἀμήν.

Miserere nobis o deus: quia pene
te est misericordia. amen.

βαρβαρόλογος. i. barbarus
ἀκρόλογος. i. acutus
πλεονασμός. i. superfluum
πλεονάζω. i. superabundo

ἑαυτολογία. i. demotialis
ἐκλαγία. i. defectus

ταπεινώσις. i. humiliatio

κακοσύνητος. i. mala compositio

σύνταξις. i. syntaxis

σύνταξις. i. Longus sermo

ἀμφιβολογία. i. obliquus sermo.

Rassius de educandis liberis





Edinburgh Codex: sketch for Pallas used as lining for the back hard cover and previously concealed behind the end page glued over it.

APPENDIX 4

FACSIMILE, TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION OF THE OLOMOUC MANUSCRIPT

APPENDIX 4: FACSIMILE, TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION OF THE OLOMOUC MANUSCRIPT

Státní Vědecká Knihovna, MS. M II 58 (*ex I IV 8, XV sec.*), c. 248r-v. Transcribed with contractions expanded. This manuscript is a catalogue of churches and other religious buildings in Rome, perhaps from the hand of a cleric responsible for church fabric and finance. Unlike the Edinburgh MS., it is not a prescriptive list of Sibylline appearance and prophecy but rather a description of what is found in the buildings, including Cardinal Orsini's 'tapestry room' in Rome.⁴²⁶

The text is well preserved (see facsimile), however there are some few letters which are difficult to decipher, especially where there is much contraction. Where I am in doubt, I have indicated the fact. The opening remarks record the fact that one of the most opulent and impressive rooms in Rome is a Studio of the Orsini family.

In camera paramenti ursinorum	<i>In the tapestry room of the Lord</i>
domini Cardinalis. mirifico	<i>Cardinal Orsini, a marvellous</i>
opere depicte sunt xii sibille	<i>work. 12 Sibyls are depicted</i>
quirent sic dicunt de adventu Christi	<i>Crying aloud thus speaking of the coming of Christ.</i>
Sibilla persica: cuius memoria	<i>Sibilla Persica: whose memory</i>
facit nicanor et ait:	<i>Nicanor preserves and she says:</i>
'Ecce bestia conculaberis et	<i>'Behold, He will tread down the beasts, and all growing things,</i>

⁴²⁶ The rendering here is semi-diplomatic. I have removed contractions and have added modern punctuation to make the document clear.

gignetur dominus in orbem et gre-	<i>Lord of all the world in the lap</i>
mium virginis erit salus gen-	<i>of a virgin, he will be the saviour of</i>
cium et pedes eius in valitudinem	<i>mankind and his feet bring the health</i>
hominum.'	<i>of men.'</i>
Sibilla libica: cuius	<i>Sibilla Libica: whom</i>
meminit euruppis:	<i>Euripides recalled:</i>
'Ecce veniet et illuminabit	<i>'Behold! God will come and pierce the</i>
Dominus condensa tenebrarum et sol-	<i>dense gloom with light and break</i>
vitur nexus synagogae et	<i>the bond, Oh Synagogue, and</i>
desinent labia hominum et videbunt	<i>the lips of men shall be shut and they will</i>
	<i>see</i>
Regem erit et tenebit	<i>he will be King, dwelling</i>
illum in gremio virgo domina	<i>in a virgin's womb who is the Queen of</i>
gencium et regnabit in mise-	<i>all mankind he will reign in</i>
ricordia et uterus matris eius	<i>mercy and his mother's Womb</i>
erit statera cunctorum.'	<i>will be the measure of all things'.⁴²⁷</i>
Sibilla delfica: qui ante	<i>Sibilla Delfica: who prophesied before</i>
troiana Bella vaticinata	<i>the Trojan War⁴²⁸</i>

⁴²⁷ 'Measure' literally, 'balance' or 'yoke-pole'.

⁴²⁸ The earliest version of the Sibyls speaking about Troy is found in Apollodorus of Erythrae. A version of this appears on the floor of Siena Cathedral on the label of the Erythraean Sibyl, '*Sibylla Erythrea quam Apollodorus suam ait esse civem.*' (Sibilla Erythraea of whom Apollodorus asserts

Thasus debet paphia ab ipso
manu eum ex origine eius

Thibilla cithara
paula nata de q. em
mus que air

Thibilla fuit regina affluens
Thibilla quida quum vocat
citharadus rasilal gentes
cithari 2 d. pulchra fuit pro
lipa capillis sedens pro p. p.
stans murem pueris d. d.
dano ad comitatu hic p. p.

Thibilla nathallina

Thibilla nathallina
Thibilla nathallina
oua de ipso sic air

Thibilla cithara regina
propter d. d. humiles
suos 2 naster in d. d. non
fuit de origine Thibilla
filio inuincibilis rex

Thibilla prima q. primo
mista de qua p. p.
Thibilla prima q. primo

Thibilla prima q. primo
de paupula 2 d. d. rex
adoratur cu clauatur et
dicit laudare cu in astu
reloz

Thibilla cumana que
fuit reposita rargum
p. p. p. p. de p. p.

Thibilla cumana que
fuit reposita rargum
p. p. p. p. de p. p.
Thibilla cumana que
fuit reposita rargum
p. p. p. p. de p. p.
Thibilla cumana que
fuit reposita rargum
p. p. p. p. de p. p.

Thibilla cumana que
fuit reposita rargum
p. p. p. p. de p. p.
Thibilla cumana que
fuit reposita rargum
p. p. p. p. de p. p.

Thibilla cithara
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Thibilla cithara

et de qua Crisipus ait:

and about whom Chrysippus spoke:⁴²⁹

c. 248 verso:

‘Nasci debere propheta absque

‘I have been born to be a prophet without

matris coitu ex virgine alvo.’

maternal coitus, from a virgin womb.’

Sibilla chimeria: in

Sibilla Chimeria:

ytalia nata (?de qua enn

Born in Italy (? of whom Enn

-nius) - que ait:

-ius [writes]) who says:

‘In prima facie virginis ascendit

‘In the first appearance of that Virgin,

puella quidam quam vocatur

of whom it was said

Eche la deus (? vocisc) ab gentes

*by the people of Egypt, ‘Behold her of
whom it was said there, Oh God, (?
vocisc)’,*

egypti et ad pulkra facie pro-

and with her beautiful face,

lixa capillis sedens super sedem

*an abundance of hair, sitting upon a
couch,*

that she was a citizen of his town, i.e. the Erythraean Sibyl.) Apollodorus went on to give some details of her prophecy. ‘She prophesied to the Greeks when they were on their way to Ilion, that Troy would fall and that Homer would write falsehoods.’ (See Chapter I for discussion of this.) The compiler of the text of the Orsini wall appears to know of the connection with Troy, but has, for some reason, put this in the mouth of the Delphic Sibyl.

⁴²⁹ The compiler’s source is Lactantius, *Div.Inst.* I vi.

stratam nutrit puerum

she nourishes her son,

dans ad comendendum lac proprium.'

giving him his own milk for food.'

Sibilla Nobilissima

The most noble Sibyl

erithea: in Babilonia

Erithraea: in Babylon

orti de Christo sic ait:

she was born. Of Christ she thus speaks:

'De excelso celorum habitaculo

'From the high habitation of Heaven,

prospexit deus humiles

God has looked down on his humble

suos et nascetur in diebus novis

*(servants) and a son shall be born in the
last days*

-simis de virgine Hebraica

of a Hebrew Virgin

filius incunabilis terre.'

in the cradle of the Earth.'

Sibilla samia: a samo

Sibilla Samia: from Samos

Insula de qua scribit

Island of whom

Eratosthenes et scripsit:

Eratosthenes wrote and she writes:

'Ecce veniet dives et nascetur

*'Behold, he who is rich will come to be
born*

de paupercula et bestie terarum

*of a poor woman, and the wild beasts of
the earth*

adorabunt eum clamabunt et

shall adore him and shall cry aloud, and

dicent,'laudate eum in astris

say, 'Praise him to the stars

celorum.'

of Heaven'.

Sibilla cumana: qui	<i>Sibilla Cumana: who</i>
Fuit tempore tarquini	<i>lived at the time of Tarquinius</i>
Prisci scripsit de Christo:	<i>Priscus she writes concerning Christ:</i> ⁴³⁰
‘Ultima Cumei venit iam	<i>‘Now the last period of Cumaeon</i>
carminis etas. Magnus ab	<i>song has come. The great</i>
integro seculorum nascitur ordo	<i>succession of Ages is born again from the</i> <i>beginning, /</i>
Iam reddidit et virgo, redeunt	<i>Now also, the Virgin returns,</i>
Saturnia regna. Iam nova	<i>and the rule of Saturn comes again. Now</i> <i>a new</i>
progenies celo dimittitur alto	<i>progeny descends from high Heaven. /</i>
tu modo nascenti puero quo	<i>You, Oh chaste Lucina, favour the Boy</i> <i>whose</i>
ferrea donet. Ac toto surget ⁴³¹	<i>birth will end the (first) age of Iron and</i>

⁴³⁰ This is an interesting distinction. Other texts read ‘Tarquin’ and it is usually assumed that this, unqualified, means Tarquin the Proud whose rude rebuff, characteristic of the man, motivated the burning of the books by the Sibilla Cumana. However, this Renaissance designer considers Tarquinius Priscus, co-founder of Roman Religion (King Numa being the other regent concerned in these matters) to be a more likely Tarquin to be attending to Sibyls and prophecy. This means the likely source is Lactantius, quoting Varro, the only Classical authority to date the Sibyl to Tarquinius Priscus.

⁴³¹ This is the well known quotation from Virgil’s *Eclogue IV*. Here the word *primum*, after *ferrea* is missing. This does not necessarily mean that it was missing from the Orsini wall in Rome. More

raise

gens aurea mundo, casta

a golden race through all the world:

fave Lucina iam regnat Apollo. ⁴³²

now (your) Apollo rules. '

Sibilla elispontia: in agro

Sibilla Elispontia: Born in the fields

Troiano nata de qua scribit

of Troy of whom

Eraclitus. H(a)ec ait:

Heraclitus wrote. She speaks this

'Ihesus Cristus nascetur de casta.'

'Jesus Christ, born of the immaculate one.'

Sibilla frigia: sit

Sibilla Frigia: Thus

vaticinata est:

she prophesies:

'Flagellabit deus potentes

'Almighty God shall chastise the kings

terre et Olimpo excelsus⁴³³

of the earth. From highest Heaven he

veniet et fremabitur concilium

will come, the Court of Heaven will judge

in celo et anuntiabitur virgo

and a virgin will be proclaimed

in vallibus desertorum.'

in the desert valleys.'

Sibilla tiburtina: cuius

Sibilla Tiburtina: whose

probably this is an error on the part of the Olomouc scribe. Similarly, *donet* is a scribal error for *desinet* in Virgil.

⁴³² Scribal error, the word *tuus* is missing after *Lucina*.

⁴³³ *Et* is almost certainly a scribal error for *ex*.

Simulacrum tenebat

image was holding

Librum ubi scriptum est:

a book on which is written:

‘Nascetur (?prophetum) in Bethlehem

*‘Christ shall be born (? a prophet) in
Bethlehem*

et anuntiabitur in nazareth

and he shall be announced in Nazareth,

regente tauro pacifico, fun

the peaceful Taurus king, founder

-datore quietis. O felix illa

of rest, being in the ascendant. Oh happy

mater cuius ubera illum lac

mother whose breast shall

-tabunt.’

suckle him.’

Sibilla europa: que

Sibilla Europa: who

de Cristo sic ait:

of Christ thus speaks:

‘Veniet ille et transibit colles

‘He will come and will cross valleys,

et montes et latices olimpi

mountains and Olympian heights.

regnabit in paupertate et

He will reign in poverty and

dominabitur in silencio et

will himself be governed remaining silent,

egredietur de utero virginis.’

being born of a virgin’s womb.’

Sibilla agrippa: sic

Sibilla Agrippa: thus

Ait de Christo:

speaks of Christ:

‘Invisibile verbum palpabitur

*‘The invisible word will be made palpable
flesh*

Et germinabit ut radix et

and though he will spring as from the root

**Siccabit ut folium et non ap
-parebit venustas eius et cir
-cumbabitur alvus maternus
et flebit deus letitia sempi
-terna et ab hominibus concul
-cabitur et nascetur ex matre
ut deus et
conversabitur ut peccator.'**

*and
he will be withered like a leaf and will not
appear beautiful and
his mother's womb will confine him
and God, the eternal joy,
will weep and will be despised of men and
he will be born from his mother as
God and that
the sinner may be converted.'*

APPENDIX 5

TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION OF THE REVELLO MANUSCRIPT

APPENDIX 5: TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION OF THE REVELLO MANUSCRIPT

LATIN DESCRIPTIONS AND ORACLES OF THE SIBYLS AS PRESERVED IN THE MANUSCRIPT OF THE REVELLO PASSION PLAY

Incipiunt vaticinia .xij sibillarum do ortu *Here begin the oracles of the twelve Sibyls*
et morte Christi. *which concern the birth and death of Christ.*

1. SibillaTiburtina

Et primo sibilla Tiburtina, annorum 20, *The first Sibyl is the Tiburtina, 20 years old,*
veste rubea inducta, desuper ad collum *dressed in a red gown, on which a hairy pelt*
pellem hyrcinam per scapulas habens, *is worn at the neck and over the shoulders.*
capillis discopertis, brevem in manu *Her hair is uncovered and she is holding a*
tenens, dicit sic: *book in her hand. She speaks thus:*

Nascetur Christus in Bethleem: et *Christ shall be born in Bethlehem and he*
annunciabitur in Nazareth / regnante *shall be announced in Nazareth, the*
tauro pacifico fundatore quietis. / O felix *peaceful Taurus reigning, founder of rest,*
illa mater cuius ubera illum lactabunt / *being in the ascendant. Oh happy mother*
Item nascetur Christus. In diebus illis / *whose breast shall suckle him. Thus Christ*
exurget mulier de stirpe hebreorum, *shall be born. In those days a woman shall*
nomine Maria, habens sponsum Joseph, / *spring from the root of the Hebrews, called*
et procreabitur ex ea sine commestione *Mary, espoused to Joseph, and from her will*
viri de Spiritu Sancto filius Dey, nomine *be born, without carnal knowledge of a man,*
Ihesus, / et ipsa erit *by the Holy Spirit, the Son of God, called*
Jesus. And the same woman shall be

virgo in partu et post partum. / Qui ergo *a virgin at the time of the birth and*

ex ea nascetur erit verus Deus et verus *thereafter. That which is to be born from her*
homo / sicut omnes prophete *shall therefore be true God and true man,*
predicaverunt, / et permanebit regnum *thus all the prophets predict, and he shall*
eius in secula seculorum. *reign forever and ever.*

c.f. Edinburgh manuscript which gives the first sentences of the Revello Tiburtina:

Nascetur christus in bethleem: et *Christ shall be born in Bethlehem and he*
annuntiabitur in nazareth regnante tauro *shall be announced in Nazareth, the*
pacifico fundatore quietis O foelix illa *peaceful Taurus reigning, founder of rest,*
mater cuius ubera illum lactabunt. *being in the ascendant. Oh happy mother*
whose breast shall suckle him.

2a. Sibilla Persica

annorum 30, vestita aurea veste, cum *30 years old, dressed in a gold gown, with a*
vello albo in capite, decentis sic: *white veil on her head, speaks thus:*

Ecce bestia conculcaberis et gignetur *Behold, He will tread down the beasts, and*
dominus in orbem terrarum. / Et *all growing things, Lord of all the kingdoms*
gremium virginis erit salus gentium et *of the world in the lap of a virgin, he will be*
pedes eius in valitudine hominum. *the saviour of mankind and his feet bring the*
Invisibile verbum palpabitur. *health of men. The invisible Word will be*
made palpable flesh.

c.f. Sibilla Persica at Albenga, though there the last sentence is omitted.

3a. Sibilla Libica

annorum 34, ornate serto viridi et florum *aged 24, clothed in a surcote with greenery*
in capite, vestita palio honesto et non *and flowers on her head, with a respectable*
multum iuvenis, dicit sic: *cloak. She is not very juvenile. She speaks*
thus:

Ecce veiniet dies et illuminabit dominus	<i>Behold! The day will come when God will</i>
condempsa (sic) tenebrarum, / et solvetur	<i>pierce the dense gloom with light and break</i>
nexus synagoge. / Et desinent labia	<i>the bond, Oh Synagogue, and the lips of men</i>
hominum et videbunt regem viventium.	<i>shall be shut and they will see the living</i>
Et tenebit illum in gremio virgo domina	<i>King, dwelling in a virgin's womb who is the</i>
gentium / et regnabit in misericordia / et	<i>Queen of all mankind and he will reign in</i>
uterusmatris eius erit statera cunctorum	<i>mercy and his mother's womb shall be the</i>
<i>(sic).</i>	<i>measure of all things.⁴³⁴</i>

4a. Sibilla Delfica

annorum 20, que ante troyana bella	<i>aged 20, who prophesied before the Trojan</i>
propetavit, vestita veste nigra, at capillis	<i>War, dressed in a black dress, with hair tied</i>
circumligatis capiti, in manu cornu	<i>round her head, holding a horn in her hand,</i>
tenens, et iuvenis, dicit sic:	<i>young looking. She speaks thus:</i>
Nascetur propheta absque matris coytu	<i>The prophet will be born without his mother</i>
<i>(sic) ex vergine eius.</i>	<i>having carnal knowledge, (born) from his</i>
	<i>virgin.</i>

5a. Sibilla Helespontina

annorum 50, in agro troyano nata, vetula	<i>50 years old, born in the fields of Troy, old</i>
et antiqua, veste curali induta, ligato velo	<i>and ancient, clothed in a coral pink gown.</i>
antquo capite sub gula circumcoluto	<i>She wears a tied veil on her head in the</i>
usque ad scapulas, quasi despecto habitu,	<i>ancient manner, flowing under her chin and</i>
dicit sic:	<i>over her shoulders, almost contemptible</i>
	<i>attire: she speaks thus:</i>

⁴³⁴ 'Measure' literally, 'balance' or 'yoke-pole'.

De excelso celorum habitaculo prospexit *From the high habitation of Heaven, God*
Deus humiles suos, / et nascetur in diebus *has looked down on his humble (servants)*
novissimis de virgine hebreica in cunabulis *and a son shall be born in these latest days*
terre. *of a Hebrew Virgin in the cradle of the*
Earth.

6a. Sibilla Cimica

annorum 18, in Italia nata, vestita *aged 18, born in Italy, dressed in a hyacinth*
celestina veste deaurata, capillis per *blue coloured dress with gold trimmings,*
scapulas sparsis, et juvenis, dicit sic: *hair loose about her shoulders, and young.*
She speaks thus:

In prima facie virginis ascendet puella *In the first appearance of the Virgin, this*
facie pulcra, / capillis prolissa, sedens *maiden ascends with her beautiful glance.*
super sedem stratam, / puerum nutriens, *With an abundance of hair, sitting upon a*
dans ei ad comendendum ius proprium, *couch, she nourishes her son, giving him*
idest lac de cello missum. *lavishly his own food, that is, giving the milk*
of Heaven.

7a. Sibilla Agripa (sic)

annorum 30, vestita rosea veste cum *30 years old, pink dress with a pink cloak*
clamide rosea, non multum iuvenis, et *(chlamys), not very young, The left hand*
sinistram manum tenens ostendendo *pointing downwards, she speaks thus, with*
deorsum, dicit sic, cum breve scripto, dicit *writing in shortened form, speaks thus:*
sic:

Invisibile verbum palpabitur, / et *The invisible word will be made palpable*
germinabit ut radix, siccabitur ut folium / *flesh and though he will spring as from the*
et non apparebit venustas eius. / *root, he will be withered like a leaf and will*
Circumdabitur alvus maternus et flebit *not appear beautiful. He will be confined by*

Deus letitia sempiterna, / et ab hominibus	<i>his mother's womb. God, the eternal joy, will</i>
conculcabitur. / Nascetur ex matre ut	<i>weep and will be despised of men. He will be</i>
Deus et conversabitur ut peccator.	<i>born from his mother as God, that the sinner may be converted.</i>

8a. Sibilla Europa

annorum 15, decora iuvenis, facie rutilans,	<i>15 years old, a beautiful maiden with a rosy</i>
vello sutilissimo capite ligata, induta veste	<i>complexion, a very fine veil arranged on her</i>
aurea, breve in manu tenens, dicit sic:	<i>head. She wears a golden dress. Holding a book in her hand she speaks thus:</i>

Veniet ille et transibit colles et montes et	<i>He will come and will cross valleys,</i>
lattice olympi silvarum, / regnabit in	<i>mountains and Olympian heights. He will</i>
paupertate et dominabitur in silencio, / et	<i>reign in poverty and will himself be governed</i>
egredietur de utero virginis.	<i>remaining silent, being born of a virgin's womb.</i>

9a. Sibilla Erithea

annorum [blank space left in MS.] in	<i>age [], born in Babylon, adorned with a</i>
Babilonia nata, ornate habitu monachali,	<i>nun's habit, shown wearing a black veil on</i>
veste induta nigro vello in capite, manu	<i>her head. Her hand bears an unsheathed</i>
gestans gladium nudum, non multum	<i>sword. She is not very aged, a plain face</i>
antiqua, mediocriter facie turbata, habens	<i>looking troubled. She has a golden circle</i>
sub pedibus circulum aureum ornatum	<i>beneath her feet decorated with stars in</i>
stellis ad similitudinem celi, dicit sic:	<i>imitation of the heavens. She speaks thus:</i>

In ultima etate humiliabitur Deus, /	<i>In the last Age, God will be humbled, the</i>
humanabitur proles divina, unietur	<i>Divine offspring will become human, uniting</i>
divinitas humanitati. / Jacebit in feno	<i>Divinity and humanity. The Lamb shall lie in</i>
agnus, et puelari officio educabitur Deus	<i>the hay, and with maidenly kindness God</i>

et homo. / Signa precedent, aput Appellas. *and man shall be reared. This sign (oracle?)
precedes (these events) in the time of
Apellas.*

Xa Sibilla Frigia

valde antiqua, induta veste rubeus, nudis *Really old, wearing a red gown, arms
brachiis, antiqua facie saturnina, crinibus* *uncovered, an aged face with a grave
sparsis per dorsum, digito indicans dicit* *expression, hair loose down her back, with a
sic:* *pointing finger, she speaks thus:*

Flagellabit deus potentes. / ex olimpo *Almighty God shall chastise kings. From
excelsus veniet, / et firmabitur consilium* *highest Heaven he will come, the Court of
in cello, / et annunciabitur virgo in valibus* *Heaven will judge and a virgin will be
desertorum.* *proclaimed in the desert valleys.*

N.B. The Tongerlo and Edinburgh lists of the Orsini Sibyls' oracles include the word, *terre*, after *potentes*, so that the prophecy reads, 'Almighty God shall chastise the kings of the earth.' Apart from that and some minor idiosyncrasies of spelling, the words are exactly the same.

XIa Sibilla Samia

a Samo insula, annorum 24, juvenis, *from Samos island, 24 years old, having a
habens formosum pectus, sutili vello* *beautiful bosom, a fine veil covering her
capite, coperto, manum ad pectus tenens,* *head, holding her hand over her breast. She
ensem nudans, sub pedibus habens, dicit* *has an unsheathed sword beneath her feet.
sic:*

Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de *Behold, he who is rich will come to be born
paupercula, / et bestie terre adorabunt* *of a poor woman, and the wild beasts of the
eum, / clamabunt et dicent: laudate eum* *earth shall adore him and shall cry aloud,
and say, 'Praise him in the Courts of*

(N. B. The text is substantially the same as the Orsini text but note 'atriis' (atrium, courtyard) in this Revello MS. and 'astris' (Tongerlo) and 'stellis' (Edinburgh) in the MSS. describing the Orsini wall.)

12a Sibilla Cumana

annorum 18, tempore Tarquini Prisci, *aged 18, at the time of Tarquinius Priscus,*
vesteta ourea veste, librum apertum et *dressed in a golden dress, in her left hand*
altum in manu gestans sinistra habens *she is holding an open book high above her*
super genu, capite discoperto, dicit sic: *knee.⁴³⁵ Her head is uncovered. She speaks*
thus:

Magnus ab integro seculorum nascitur *The great succession of Ages is born again*
ordo. / Iam reddit et virgo, reddeunt *from the beginning. / Now also, the Virgin*
saturna regna; / jam nova progenies e *returns, and the rule of Saturn comes again,*
cello dimittitur alto. / Tu modo nascenti */ Now a new progeny descends from high*
puero, quo ferrea primum / desinet et toto *Heaven. / You, Oh chaste Lucina, favour the*
surget gens aurea mundo, / casta fave *Boy whose birth will end the first age of Iron*
Lucina: tuus iam regnat Apollo. *and raise a golden race through all the*
world: now your Apollo rules.

(These are lines 5-10 of Virgil's *Eclogue IV*.)

⁴³⁵ The mention of Tarquinius Priscus shows that the origin of this description is Varro, since he is the only Classical Authority to date the Sibyl to Tarquinius Priscus. All others cite Tarquinius Superbus, Tarquin the Proud, as the Tarquin who rudely spurned the Sibyl when she asked a price for her nine prophetic books.

APPENDIX 6

COMPARISON OF MANUSCRIPTS

APPENDIX 6: COMPARISON OF MANUSCRIPTS

This appendix is intended as a comparison of the early prescriptive Greek source contained in the Edinburgh manuscript, with the close accounts of what appeared on the original Orsini fresco. This is in order to have as accurate an idea as possible of what text was shown on the Orsini Palace wall. The Revello manuscript is a useful record of late scribal errors which found their way into the later frescos. However it is outside the purposes of this appendix, and so is excluded.

THE EARLIEST KNOWN PRESCRIPTIVE MANUSCRIPT

The Edinburgh Manuscript is not a description of the Orsini wall. It is a very early prescriptive list.

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Library, MS. 120 [previously Laing III 141 misc. XV sec., see 35r-37r.] On this manuscript, see C. R. Borland, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Medieval Manuscripts in Edinburgh University Library* (Edinburgh: [n. pub.], 1916) pp. 191-193. See also T. De Marnis, *La biblioteca napoletana dei re d'Aragona* Vol. II (Milan: [n. pub.], 1957-62), pp. 38, 320. See also P. O. Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*, Vol. IV, (London-Leiden-New York- Copenhagen-Cologne: [n. pub.], 1989) p. 21. This Edinburgh codex presents a list of Sibyls not in the order in which they appear on the wall. It gives names, precise information as to their ages and a little other information as to their features. It also gives their oracles.

EARLY MANUSCRIPTS DESCRIBING THE ORSINI WALL IN ROME

Detailed Accounts: The following three manuscripts record the canonical order of the Sibyls, their prophecies and detailed descriptions of their appearance.⁴³⁶ They seem to be accurate descriptions of the Orsini wall:

Liège: Bibliothèque du Grand Séminaire, MS. 6 F 1 (XV sec.), cc. 245v-248v.

Tongerlo: Abdijarchief, MS. AAT V nr. 136 (*ex* III 16, circa 1450), cc. 117r-124v.

Brussels: Bibliothèque Royale, MS. 3553-3567 (*circa* 1440-1470), cc. 265v-267r.

Brief Accounts: In a further three codices, only those minimal things which were part of the *tituli* of the frescoes are conveyed. These *Tituli* consist of the name, appearance [of the first ten] and the oracles of the twelve Sibyls. These texts carry no substantial differences from the previous group. They agree as to the order of the Sibyls, their appearance and in the selection and distribution of the prophecies. These three are:

Olomouc: Státní Vědecká Knihovna, MS. M II 58 (*ex* I IV 8, XV sec.), c. 248r-v.

Stuttgart: Württembergische Landesbibliothek, MS. Theol. Et Philol. Q 4° 171 (Salzburg 1463), cc63v-64r (where the order of the Sibyls is the inverse of the canonical)

Monaco: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS. c.m. 19859 (Tegernsee, Bavaria, 1477-1478), cc. 187v-188v.

All these 'descriptions' are in agreement, more or less explicitly, about the frescos of Cardinal Orsini. See M. Gagliardo, 'Una raccolta di 'scripta' dallo 'Studio' del cardinale Giordano Orsini a gli affreschi delle sei età del mondo nel suo palazzo romano,' in *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia. Quaderni*, s. IV, I, 1996.

⁴³⁶ See the article 'Le Sibille di Giovanni Romei', in the work edited by Carla Di Francesca, *Le Sibille di Casa Romei: Storia e Restauro* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1998), p. 21, particularly fn. 20 p. 42.

Other manuscript sources: There are two lists in manuscripts at Ferrara and Padua, which seem to have been made independently of each other.

Ferrara: Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea, MS. Antonelli 393 [author and copyist Battista Panetti, c. 1490], see 52r-53r. This is a notable Ferrarese miscellaneous codex, a collection of texts, verse, prose, Latin and vernacular. It contains a list of the twelve Sibyls, in the canonical order with their prophecies, followed by various proscriptions as to how to render their appearance. Whilst dated about 1490, one can moreover consider it as evidence of the circulation of similar texts in the locality. On this codex see A. E. Quaglio, 'Leonardo Giustinian in una silloge ferrarese di rime quattrocentesche', in *Rivista della letteratura italiana*, I, 1983, pp. 311-376 (with bibliography) and T. Matarrese, 'Il volgare a Ferrara tra corte e cancelleria', in *Rivista della letteratura italiana*, VIII, 1990, pp. 515-560, especially p. 557. For further information on Panetti, that is information about his marginal notes made in 1488 to a codex of Leon Battista Alberti's *De Pictura*, see C. Badini, 'Leon Battista Alberti, *De Pictura*', index entry number 40 in Molfino, A. Mottola, and M. Natale, (editors) *Le Muse e il Principe, Catalogo e Saggi*, (Modena: Catalogue of an exhibition at Milan in 1991) pp. 167-169 of the Catalogue.

Padua: Padova, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS. 201 [misc., 1463-1471, cc. 116v-118r. The Padua codex gives names description and oracles of the Sibyls, placed in canonical order, except for a final transposition of the Sibyls Europa and Agrippa. On this MS. see A. Cornagliotti, *La Passione di Revello*, (Torino: [n. pub.], 1976) n. 18 on p. XXXVIII. and p. XLI. See also De Clercq, 'Quelques Séries italiennes de Sibylles', in *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, XLVIII-XLIX, 1978, p. 125. See also De Clercq, 'Contribution à l'iconographie des Sibylles I', in *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schoone Kunsten*, 1979, p. 8. See also E. Cozzi, *Antonio Altan e l'Umanesimo. Gli affreschi di S. Vito* (Pordenone: [n. pub.], 1987) p. 30 and n. 96.

COMPARISON OF THE EDINBURGH, OLOMOUC AND TONGERLO MANUSCRIPTS

The order I cite here is the order supported by the Liège, Tongerlo and Brussels manuscripts, i.e. the Varronian order that is now accepted as canonical. Scholarship on the subject often asserts that the Edinburgh manuscript does not differ from any of the other surviving manuscripts as to the oracles of the individual Sibyls. However, I have found minor differences between the Edinburgh version of the prophecies and that of the Tongerlo manuscript. I have not seen the Tongerlo MS. and derive its contents from, the article, 'Le Sibille di Giovanni Romei', by Matilde Gagliardo in *Le Sibille di Casa Romei: Storia e Restauro*, (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1998) edited by Carla Di Francesca, p. 21 *et seq.* I have recorded these differences where found. Di Francesco does not cite all the Tongerlo prophecies.

1: SIBILLA PERSICA

Edinburgh:

Ecce bestia conculcabitur et gignetur Dominus in orbem terrarum et in gremium virginis erit salus gentium et pedes eius in valitudine hominum.

Olomouc:

Ecce bestia conculaberis et gignetur dominus in orbem [terrarum not recorded] et gremium virginis erit salus gentium et pedes eius in valitudinem hominum.'

Tongerlo:

Ecce bestia conculcaberis et gignetur Dominus in orbe terrarum et gremium virginis erit salus gentium et pedes eius in valitudine hominum.

Behold, He will tread down the beasts, and all growing things, Lord of all the kingdoms of the world in the lap of a virgin. He will be the saviour of mankind and his feet bring the health of men.

2: SIBILLA LIBICA

Edinburgh:

Ecce veniet dies et illuminabit dominus condensa tenebrarum et solventur nexus synagoga et desinent labia hominum et videbunt regem viventium et tenebit illum in gremio virgo domina gentium [**'et regnabit in misericordia et uterus matris'** of the Tongerlo text is missing from the Edinburgh text and replaced by, **'et virtus'**] **et virtus** eus erit statera cunctorum.

The Revello Passion Play manuscript list of Sibyl identities and oracles includes the longer phrase.

Olomouc:

Ecce veniet [**dies is missing**] et illuminabit Dominus condensa tenebrarum et solvitur nexus synagogae et desinent labia hominum et videbunt Regem **erit** et tenebit illum in gremio virgo domina gencium et regnabit in misericordia et uterus **matre** eius erit statera cunctorum.

Tongerlo:

Ecce veniet dies et illuminabit dominus condensa tenebrarum et solventur nexus synagoge et desinent labia hominum et vedebunt regem vivencium et tenebit illum in gremio virgo domina gencium **et regnabit in misericordia et uterus matris** eus erit statera cunctorum,

*Behold! The day will come when God will pierce the dense gloom with light and break the bond, Oh Synagogue, and the lips of men shall be shut and they will see the living King, dwelling in a virgin's womb who is the Queen of all mankind and he will reign in mercy and his mother's womb shall be the measure of all things.*⁴³⁷

⁴³⁷ 'Measure' literally, 'balance' or 'yoke-pole'.

3: SIBILLA DELPHICA

Edinburgh:

Nasci debere prophetam absque maris coitu **et matre virgine.**

I have been born to be a prophet without coitus with a husband, both virgin and mother.

(Perhaps there has been a clerical mistake and 'et' should read 'ex' in the Edinburgh MS., which would make more sense, although the text itself is quite clear.)

Olomouc:

Nasci debere propheta absque maris coitu **ex virgine eius.**

(Identical with Tongerlo.)

Tongerlo:

Nasci debere prophetam absque maris coitu **de virgine eius.**

I have been born to be a prophet from a virgin conceiving without coitus with her husband.

4: SIBILLA CUMEA

Edinburgh:

In prima facie virginis ascendit puella quaedam necans gladiis: vastans gentes
Egypti et ex pulcra facie. Prolixa capillis sedens super sedem stratam nutrit
puerum dans ei ad Comedendum lac proprium.

Olomouc:

In prima facie virginis ascendet puella **quidam quam vocatur. Eche la deus**
?volisc ab gentes egypti et ex pulcra facie prolixa capillis sedens super sedem
stratam nutrit puerum dans ad comendendum lac proprium.

Tongerlo:

This is not recorded by Gagliardo and I have not yet been able to gain permission for access to the MS. myself.

*In the first appearance of the Virgin, this maiden ascends killing with swords:
laying waste the people of Egypt with her beautiful glance. With an abundance
of hair, sitting upon a couch, she nourishes her son, giving him his own milk.*

5: SIBILLA ERITREA

Edinburgh:

De excelso celorum habitaculo prospexit **dominus** humiles suos. Et nascetur in
diebus novissimis di virgine hebraica filius incunabulis terrae.

(N. B. with the exception of the word *filius*, this is exactly the inscription that appears
on the floor of Siena Duomo in the mouth of the Sibilla Erythraea.)

Olomouc:

De excelso celorum habitaculo prospexit **deus** humiles suos et nascetur in
diebus novissimis de virgine hebraica filius incunabilis terre.

Tongerlo:

This is not recorded by Gagliardo

*From the high habitation of Heaven, God has looked down on his humble
(servants) and a son shall be born in these latest days of a Hebrew Virgin in the
cradle of the Earth.*

6: SIBILLA SAMIA

Edinburgh:

Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de paupercula et bestie terrarum adorabunt eum **et**
clamabunt et dicent: Laudate eum in stellis celorum.

Olomouc:

Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de paup(er)cula et bestie terarum adorabunt eum
clamabunt et dicent, 'laudate eum in **astris** celorum.'

Tongerlo:

Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de pauperula et bestie terrarum adorabunt eum
clamabunt et dicent laudate eum in **astris** celorum.

*Behold, he who is rich will come to be born of a poor woman, and the wild
beasts of all lands shall adore him and shall cry aloud, and say, 'Praise him to
the starry Heavens'.*

7: SIBILLA CUMANA (The Sibyl who burned the books, not Virgil's mad Sibyl)

Edinburgh:

Ultima cumei venit iam carminis aetas magnus **qui** ab integro seclorum nascitur
Ordo . Iam **redit** et virgo redeunt saturnia regna. Iam nova progenies caelo
dimittitur alto.

Olomouc:

Ultima Cumei venit iam carminis etas. Magnus ab integro seculorum nascitur
ordo Iam reddidit et virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna. Iam nova progenies celo
dimittitur alto **tu modo nascenti puero quo ferrea donet.**⁴³⁸ Ac toto surget
gens aurea mundo, casta fave Lucina [scribal error; *tuus* is missing.] iam
regnat Apollo

*Now the last period of Cumaean song has come which is born from the
beginning of a new age. Now the Virgin returns, the Kingdoms of Saturn return.
A new progeny is sent down from high Heaven. Now a new progeny descends
from high Heaven. / You, Oh chaste Lucina, favour the Boy whose birth will*

⁴³⁸ This includes the well known quotation from Virgil's *Eclogue IV*. Here the word *primum*, after *ferrea* is missing. This does not necessarily mean that it was missing from the Orsini wall in Rome. More probably this is an error on the part of the Olomouc scribe. Similarly, *donet* is a scribal error for *desinet* in Virgil.

*end the (first) age of Iron and raise a golden race through all the world: now
(your) Apollo rules.*

Tongerlo:

This is not recorded by Gagliardo

N.B. This is the same oracle as that which is on Siena floor in the mouth of this Sibyl, save for the section here emboldened. In Siena we find: '***saeculorum***', '***demittitur***' and there is no shortened '***q***'.

8: SIBILLA HELLESPONTICA

Edinburgh:

Iesus christus nascetur de Casta.

Olomouc:

Ihesus Cristus nascetur de casta.

Jesus Christ born of the Pure One.

Tongerlo:

This is not recorded by Gagliardo.

9: SIBILLA PHRYGIA

Edinburgh:

Flagellabit deus potentes terre **et** olimpo excelsus veniet et **f**irmabitur consilium
in caelo et **ann**untiabitur virgo in vallibus desertorum.

Olomouc:

Flagellabit deus potentes terre et Olimpo excelsus veniet et **f**remabitur (sic)
concilium in cello et **an**untiabitur virgo in vallibus desertorum.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁹ *Et* is almost certainly a scribal error for *e* and *fremabitur* is almost certainly a scribal error for *f*irmabitur.

Tongerlo:

**Flagellabit deus potentes terre ex olimpo excelsus veniet et firmabitur
concilium in celo et annuntiabitur virgo in vallibus desertorum.**

*Almighty God shall chastise the kings of the earth. From highest Heaven he will
come, the Court of Heaven will judge and a virgin will be proclaimed in the
desert valleys.*

10: SIBILLA TIBURTINA

Edinburgh:

Nascetur christus in bethleem: et annuntiabitur in nazareth regente tauro
pacifico fundatore quietus o foelix illa mater cuius ubera illum lactabunt.

Olomouc:

Nascetur (**?prophetum**) in **Bethlehem** et annuntiabitur in Nazareth regente tauro
pacifico, fundatore quietus. O felix illa mater cuius ubera illum lactabunt.

*Christ shall be born in Bethlehem and he shall be announced in Nazareth, the
peaceful Taurus, founder of rest, being in the ascendant. Oh happy mother
whose breast shall suckle him.*

Tongerlo:

This is not recorded by Gagliardo.

N.B. This is substantially the same as the inscription on the floor of Siena Cathedral,
except for the emboldened letters and the addition of the word '*illa*'. On the floor, the words
are spelled, '*Bethlehem*', '*annuncibitur*' and '*felix*'.

11: SIBILLA EUROPA

Edinburgh:

Veniet ille et transibit colles et montes **ex** latice olimpi **et** regnabit in
paupertate et dominabitur in silencio et egredietur de utero virginis.

He will come and will cross valleys, mountains from Olympian heights. He will rule in poverty, governing silently, being born of a virgin's womb.

Olomouc:

Veniet ille et transibit colles et montes et latice olympi regnabit in paup [*er is missing*] tate et dominabitur in silencio et egredietur de utero virginis.

Tongerlo:

Veniet ille et transibit colles et montes et latice olympi, regnabit in paupertate et dominabitur in silencio at egredietur de utero virginis.

He will come and will cross valleys, mountains and Olympian heights. He will reign in poverty and will himself be governed remaining silent, being born of a virgin's womb.

12: SIBILLA AGRIPPA

Edinburgh:

In the Edinburgh manuscript she is called 'SIBILLA EGIPTIA'.

Invisibile verbum palpabitur et germinabit ut radix et secabitur ut folium non apparebit vetustas [eius et circumdabit alius] materna et flebit deus Letitia sempiterna et ab hominibus conculcabitur et nascetur ex matre ut deus et conversabitur ut peccator.⁴⁴⁰

('et circumdabit illum alvus', is missing from the Edinburgh manuscript) The Edinburgh manuscript therefore reads:

The invisible word will be made flesh and though he will spring as from the root, he will be withered like a leaf and will not appear aged. He will weep,

⁴⁴⁰ Surely these differences are the result of a clerical error, 'venustas' makes much more sense in context than 'vetustas', as does 'alvus maternus' rather than 'alius materna'.

despised of men. He will be born from his mother as God so that the sinner may be converted.

Olomouc:

Invisibile verbum palpabitur et germinabit ut radix et siccabitur ut folium et non apparebit venustas eius et circumdabit alvus maternus et flebit deus letitia sempiterna et ab hominibus conculcabitur et nascetur ex matre ut deus et conversabitur ut peccator.

(This diverges in no significant way from Edinburgh and therefore the translation above.)

Tongerlo:

Indivisible verbum palpabitur et germinabit ut radix et siccabitur ut folium et non apparebit venustas eius et circumdabit illum alvus maternus et flebit deus leticia sempiterna et ab hominibus conculcabitur et nascetur ex matre ut deus et conversabitur ut peccator.

The indivisible word will be made flesh and though he will spring as from the root, he will be withered like a leaf and will not appear beautiful. His mother's womb will confine Him. God, the eternal joy, will weep, despised of men. He will be born from his mother as God, that the sinner may be converted.

The Revello MS. gives *invisibile* and *venustas* and includes the phrase *Circumdabitur alvus maternus*.

COMPARISON OF THE PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SIBYLS AS BETWEEN THE EDINBURGH, REVELLO, OLOMOUC, FERRARA AND PADUA MANUSCRIPTS

There is a wealth of manuscripts concerning the Sibyl Cycles.⁴⁴¹ These five are intended to provide a sufficient sample from those available to me to make it quite clear from a comparison of texts that there is no real prescriptive tradition as to the appearance of the individual Sibyls. Sibyls do, in the process of time, acquire identifying attributes in some series, but there is no comparable uniformity imposed that approaches the uniformity of oracles and their attribution to individual Sibyls in all the frescos. All five manuscripts display a remarkable unanimity however, as regards text and attribution.

It is interesting to note that the Olomouc Manuscript gives historical and literary origins of the Sibyls and that the inscriptions on the floor of Siena Cathedral cite these in relation to the following five Sibyls: Delphica; Persica; Lybica; Hellespontica and Samia. This implies that one of the sources used in the design derived from a related manuscript. Olomouc is a church official's inventory account of the valuable aspects of ecclesiastical buildings in Rome, including the Orsini fresco, therein described. It is sensible to assume that the Orsini fresco gave such scholarly details therefore.

⁴⁴¹ I am using the version of the Ferrara codex and the Paduan manuscript recorded in Carla Di Francesca, *Le Sibille di Casa Romei: Storia e Restauro* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1998).

1 TIBURTINA

Edinburgh

Vidua, annorum XL

Widow, of 40 years old.

Revello

**Et primo sibilla Tiburtina, annorum 20, veste rubea inducta, desuper ad
collum pellem hyrcinam per scapulas havens, capillis discopertis, brevem
in manu tenens, dicit sic**

*The first Sibyl is the Tiburtina, 20 years old, dressed in a red gown, on which a
hairy pelt is worn at the neck and over the shoulders. Her hair is uncovered and
she is holding a book in her hand. She speaks thus:*

Olomouc

Cuius simulacrum tenebat librum ubi scriptum est:

This image holds a book on which there is writing.

Ferrara codex: (MS. Antonelli 393, cit. c. 53r.)

Pingetur X mediae aetatis matrona, veste nigra et velato capite.⁴⁴²

Depicted X in middle age, matronly, dressed in black and with veiled head.

The Padua manuscript: (MS. 210, cit c. 117v)

**Juvenis vultu pingui, habitu viduali, ad collum clamidis cordonem rubeum,
clamide et veste nigra.**

Young and with a chubby face, in widow's weeds, with a red tie on her cloak.

The cloak and gown are black.

⁴⁴² I am unable to offer an explanation as to the significance of the letter or number 'X' here.

2 PERSICA

Edinburgh

anorum (? xxx)⁴⁴³

30(?) years old.

Revello

annorum 30, vestita aurea veste, cum vello albo in capite.

30 years old, dressed in a gold gown, with a white veil on her head.

Olomouc

cuius memoria facit nicanor:

Whose memory Nicanor preserves. (No details of appearance are given.)

Ferrara codex: (MS. Antonelli 393, citing. c. 52r.)

Pingitur autem mediae actatis, aspectu gravi, velata caput, alba veste induta et succincta.

Painted moreover, as middle aged, with serious face, veiled head, wearing white fairly close fitting clothes)

The Padua manuscript: (MS. 201, vide c. 116v)

Juvenis et decora, vultu albo, vestita clamide merola aperta ante, cum cocta alba linea subtus et corrigia aurea, cum velo simplici super caput.

Young and beautiful, with a white face, dressed in a regal cloak with a dark opening at the front, with a white cote edged and belted in gold, with a plain veil over the head.

⁴⁴³ Manuscript unclear.

3 LIBICA

Edinburgh

Saeraena xxv annorum.⁴⁴⁴

A black woman of twenty-five years old.

Revello

Annorum 34, ornate serpto viridi et florum in capite, vestita palio honesto et non multum iuvenis.

Aged 34, adorned with a wreath with greenery and flowers on her head, with a respectable cloak. She is not very juvenile.

Olomouc

Cuius meminit euruppes:

Whom Euripides recalled:

Ferrara (MS. Antonelli 393, cit. c. 52r.)

Pingetur autem fusca et fere nigra sicut ethyopissa, veste aurata et similiter mediae aetatis et velato capite.

Depicted dark, moreover nearly black, like an Ethiopian, dressed in gold and seeming middle-aged and veiled.

Padua (MS. 201, cit., c. 116v.)

Medio tempore constituta, vultu non nimis nigro, vestita aureo vestimento, cum clamide nigra usque ad genua.

Middle aged, her looks not too black, clothed in golden garments, with a black knee-length cloak.

⁴⁴⁴ C.f. Saracena.

4. DELPHICA

Edinburgh

Vetustissima cum bacula

Extremely old with a stick.

Revello

**Annorum 20, que ante troyana bella propetavit, vestita veste nigra, at
capillis circumligatis capiti, in manu cornu tenens, et iuvenis.**

*Aged 20, who prophesied before the Trojan War, dressed in a black dress, with
hair tied round her head, holding a horn in her hand, young looking.*

Olomouc

Annus vinti Troiana Bella vaticinata et de qua Crisipus ait:

*Aged twenty, who prophesied the Trojan War and about whom Chrysippus
spoke.*

Ferrara (MS. Antonelli 393, cit. c. 52r.)

**Pingetur autem senex, veste nigra, velato capite in modum monachalis
quasi Ordinis Sancti Dominici.**

*Depicted as aged, dressed in black, with her head veiled in the manner of a nun
like the Sacred Dominican Order.*

Padua (MS. 201, cit., c. 116v.):

**Aetatis senilis, habitu monachali, vestita clamide nigra et cotta subtus alba,
cum baculo in manu more senili, curva.**

*Of extreme age, in nun's attire, dressed with a black cloak and with a white
cotta beneath it, sick in hand, bitten by age, bent.*

5. HELLESPONTICA

Edinburgh

xv annorum.

15 years old.

Revello

Annorum 50, in agro troyano nata, vetula et antiqua, veste curali induta, ligato velo antquo capite sub gula circumcoluto usque ad scapulas, quasi despecto habitu.

50 years old, born in the fields of Troy, old and ancient, clothed in a coral pink gown. She wears a tied veil on her head in the ancient manner, flowing under her chin and over her shoulders, almost contemptible attire: she speaks thus:

Olomouc

In agro Troiano nata de qua scribit Eraclitus.

Born in the fields of Troy of whom Heraclitus wrote.

Ferrara (MS. Antonelli 393, cit. c. 52v.)

Pingitur itaque puella macilenta, sed tamen compta et veste viridi obscuri coloris.

Depicted thus as an emaciated girl, but nevertheless neat and with dark green colours.

Padua (MS. 201, cit., c. 117v):

Etatis juvenilis et decorissima, vultu puerili et alba, capillis rubeis, vel rubucundis, post terga expansis, cum clamide viridi et corrigia deaurata.

Young and charming, with a pale baby face, red or rather ruddy hair, hanging down her back, with a green cloak and a golden ribbon.

6. CHIMICA

Edinburgh

Turpis Sibilla Eimeria: Senissima: cum baculo in manu. Sparsis Crinibus.

Ugly Cimmerian Sibyl: Very old with stick in hand. Sparse hair.

Revello

**annorum 18, in Italia nata, vestita celestina veste dcaurata, capillis per
scapulas sparsis, et juvenis.**

*aged 18, born in Italy, dressed in a hyacinth-blue coloured dress with gold
trimmings, hair loose about her shoulders, and young.*

Olomouc

In Ytalia nata de qua ennius

Born in Italy, of whom Ennius (writes)

Ferrara (MS. Antonelli 393, cit. c. 52r.)

**Pingetur namque senex, macra, fusca, discoperta caput, capillo spars
incompta et facie horrida et veste blauia.⁴⁴⁵**

*Depicted as for example old, in mourning, black, with uncovered head, with
sparse, disordered hair and ugly face, with blue garments.*

Padua (MS. 201, cit., cc. 116v – 117r.):

**Senes et curva, cum capillis nigris et albis mixtis more senili usque ad aures
longis, vultu crispo, vestita vestimento azuro et corrigia nigra, baculum
habens substantabilem.**

*Old and bent, with black hair mixed with white, disordered with age, in length
hanging about her ears, with a twisted expression, clothed in garments of blue
and absolute black. She has a stick as a prop.*

⁴⁴⁵ *Blauia* is Latinised German, not Mediaeval Latin. This may hint at the origins of this manuscript.

7. AGRIPPA

Edinburgh

Sibilla egiptia annorum triginta

Sibilla Egypta (an alternative name for Agrippa in many MSS. and frescos) 30 years old.

Revello

Annorum 30, vestita rosea veste cum clamide rosea, non multum iuvenis, et sinistram manum tenens ostendendo deorsum.

30 years old, pink dress with a pink cloak (chlamys), not very young. The left hand is pointing downwards.

Olomouc

(There is no physical description.)

Ferrara (MS. Antonelli 393, cit. c. 53r.

The description of the Agrippa is the only instance in this manuscript of a precise age being given.)

Pingitur autem juvenis et annorum XXX, velato similiter capite, veste rubea frissata ad modum draconis.

Depicted as a young thirty-year-old. Veiled close to the head, dressed in red with fringed edges in the manner of a dragon.

Padua (MS. 201, cit., cc. 117v – 118r.):

Juvenis et decora, vultu albo et in capite solum velum habens super crines, cum clamide celistri, cum corrigia aurea, sub clamide habens vestitum rubeum.

Young and elegant, a pale face and on her head wearing only a veil over her hair, with a Cerulean cloak, with a gold cord to tie it with. Under the cloak she has a red gown.

8. EUROPA

Edinburgh

XXV annorum

24 years old.

Revello

**Annorum 15, decora iuvenis, facie rutilans, vello sutilissimo capite ligata,
induta veste aurea, breve in manu tenens.**

*15 years old, a beautiful maiden with a rosy complexion, a very fine veil
arranged on her head. She wears a golden dress. Holding a book in her hand.*

Olomouc

(No physical description given)

Ferrara (MS. Antonelli 393, cit. c. 53r.)

**Pingetur itaque mediae aetatis, colore rubicunda, capillo sparso incompta,
albe veste et pinguis.**

*Depicted as middle-aged, of a rubicund complexion, with loose, untidy locks, in
white clothing and stout.*

Padua (MS. 210, cit., cc. 118r.):

**Juvenis, vultu rubicundo et amplo, cum capillis super expansis rubicundis
post terga, et formosa, clamide viridi subtus, cum cocta alba linea.**

*Young, with a ruddy complexion and a broad face, with red hair above and
extending down her back, attractive, A green chemise under a white linen cotta.*

9. ERITRAEA

Edinburgh

xxv Annorum:

24 years old.

Revello

Annorum [blank space left in MS.] in Babilonia nata, ornate habitu monachali, veste induta nigro vello in capite, manu gestans gladium nudum, non multum antiqua, mediocriter facie turbata, habens sub pedibus circulum aureum ornatum stellis ad similitudinem celi.

Age , born in Babylon, adorned with a nun's habit, shown wearing a black veil on her head. Her hand bears an unsheathed sword. She is not very aged, a plain face looking troubled. She has a golden circle beneath her feet decorated with stars in imitation of the heavens. She speaks thus:

Olomouc

In Babilonia orta.

Who came from Babylon.

Ferrara (MS. Antonelli 393, cit. c. 52v.)

Pingitur autem veste regia purpurea, mediae aetatis, pulchra facie, caput compta.

Depicted with clothes in regal purple, middle aged, with a beautiful face and neat hair.

Padua (MS. 201, cit., cc. 117r.):

**Juvenis, vultu pingui, in capite habens solum velum super capillos, vestem
purpuream, albam habens cum manicis largis, clamidem rubicundam
foderatam varota⁴⁴⁶ (sic).**

*Young, plump-faced, her head with only a veil covering her hair, in purple
clothes, having an alb with long wide sleeves, and a red cloak.*

⁴⁴⁶ The meaning of the last two words is not clear.

10. FRIGIA

Edinburgh

Annorum quinquaginta.

Fifty years old.

Revello

**Valde antiqua, induta veste rubeus, nudis brachiis, antiqua facie saturnina,
crinibus sparsis per dorsum, digito indicans.**

*Really old, wearing a red gown, arms uncovered, an aged face with a grave
expression, hair loose down her back, with a pointing finger.*

Olomouc

(No physical description.)

Ferrara (MS. Antonelli 393, cit. c. 52v.)

Pingitur quoque senex, velato capite, horribili aspectu, veste rubea.

Also depicted as old, her head veiled, with an ugly face and red clothes.

Padua (MS. 210, cit., c. 117v.):

**Etatis (sic) senis, crispo vultu, cum clamide et vestimento rubeis, in capite
solum velum habens super crines, crines post terga pendens.**

*Elderly with a twisted expression, with red cloak and gown, having her head
only covered with a veil over her hair, her hair hanging down her back.*

11. SAMIA

Edinburgh

Eiusdem aetatis.

The same age.

(meaning ‘the same age as the previous Sibyl in the list, the Sibylla Eritrea, identified as 25 years old).

Revello

A Samo insula, annorum 24, juvenis, habens formosum pectus, sutili vello capite, coperto, manum ad pectus tenens, ensem nudans, sub pedibus habens.

From Samos Island, 24 years old, having a beautiful bosom, a fine veil covering her head, holding her hand over her breast. She has an unsheathed sword beneath her feet.

Olomouc

A Samo Insula de qua scribit Eratosthenes.

From Samos Island of whom Eratosthenes wrote.

Ferrara (MS. Antonelli 393, cit. c. 52v.):

Pingetur autem quidem juvenis et formosa, compta caput, cum parvo pileo qui in hac forma: (The sketch of the hat, repeated also in the margin of the manuscript, corresponds approximately to a triangle with a little ball at the top.)
supra servicem, albo induta.

Depicted as undoubtedly young and beautiful with a neat head of hair, with a little felt cap in this form: (diagram appears here in the manuscript) an alb worn above another garment.

Padua (MS. 201, cit., c. 117r.):

**Juvenis, vultu amplo et albo, in capite habens tanquam mitram rotundam
croceam, cum capilis post terga sparsis, corrigia aurea et vestimento et
clamide albis.**

*Young, an ample pale face, having a circular yellow mitre, with hair hanging
down her back, with a gold ribbon and a white cloak and gown.*

12. CUMANA

Edinburgh

Cum baculo senissima.

With a stick, extremely old.

Revello

**Annorum 18, tempore Tarquini Prisci, vesteta ourca veste, librum apertum
et altum in manu gestans sinistra habers super genu, capite discoperto.**

*Aged 18, at the time of Tarquinius Priscus, dressed in a golden dress, in her left
hand she is holding an open book high above her knee. Her head is uncovered.*

Olomouc

Qui fuit tempore Tarquini Prisci.

Who lived at the time of Tarquinius Priscus.

Ferrara (MS. Antonelli 393, cit. c. 52v.):

Pingitur enim senex et eo fere habitu quo Delphica.

She is depicted as old and dressed almost the same as the Delphica.

Padua (MS. 210, cit., c. 117r - v.):

**Senes, habitu monastico, cum clamide nigra, vestimento beretino, cum
baculo substentabili in manu eius.**

*Old, dressed like a nun, with black cloak, with ash grey clothes, with a support-
ing stick in her hand.*

APPENDIX 7

TEXT OF THE SACRED LITURGY OF THE SIBYL IN LATIN AND VERNACULAR LANGUAGES

APPENDIX 7: TEXT OF THE SACRED LITURGY OF THE SIBYL IN LATIN AND VERNACULAR LANGUAGES

TEXTUAL EXAMPLES OF THE SACRED LITURGY OF THE SIBYL

THE LATIN SIBYL:

Manuscript Musical Setting: Tenth to Eleventh Century.

Judici signum tellus sudore madescet	<i>There are signs that justice will be done, soon the earth will be bathed in sweat</i>
Et celo rex adveniet per secla futurus	<i>And the King of Heaven will come for future ages</i>
Scilicet in carne presens ut judicet orbem	<i>Visibly taking flesh to judge the world</i>
Unde Deum cernent incredulus atque fidelis	<i>Where both believers and unbelievers see Him</i>
Celsum cum sanctis cui jam termino in ipso	<i>On high with Saints then and to the end of time</i>
Sic anime cum carne aderunt quas judicet ipse	<i>Thus souls and bodies will come to be judged by Him</i>
Cum jacet incultus densis in vepribus orbis	<i>While the earth lies a wasteland thick with tares</i>
Reicient simulacra viri cunctam quoque gazam	<i>Men will reject their idols and all their treasures,</i>
Exuret terras ignis portumque polumque	<i>Fire will consume earth, water and air</i>

**Inquirens tetri portas esfringet
averni**

*Searchingly, he will force the gloomy gates
of Hell*

**Sanctorum sed enim cuncte lux
libera carni**

*But truly the light will liberate all the
bodies of the saints*

**Tradentur fontes eternaue
flamma cremabit**

*Fountains of eternal flame will burn the
guilty,*

**Occultos actus retegns, tunc
quisque loquetur**

*Revealing hidden deeds and instantly
speaking the secrets of all aloud*

**Secreta atque Deus reserabit
pectora luci**

And God will open hearts to the light

**Tunc erit et luctus stridebunt
dentibus omnes**

*And then there will be wailing and
gnashing of teeth*

**Eripitur solis jubar et choris
interit astris**

*The brightness of the sun will be snatched
away and the dancing star destroyed.*

**Solvetur celum lunaris splendor
obibit**

*The light of the moon will die in the melting
heavens*

Deiicet colles valles extollat abimo

*The hills will be laid low and every valley
raised,*

**Nonerit in rebus hominum sublime
vel altum**

*There shall be no more depth or height in
human affairs.*

**Tum equantur campis montes et
cerula ponti**

*Mountains and valleys will be an equal
plain*

**Omnia cessabunt tellus confracta
peribit**

*And all the blue seas will cease and the
fractured earth will perish.*

**Sic pariter fontes torrentur
fluminaque igni**

*Likewise fountains and rivers will be dried
by fire*

**Et tuba tunc sonitum tristem
demittet ab alto**

*And all at once the trumpet will sound its
sad note from on high*

**Orbe gemens facinus miserum
variosque labores**

*Groaning with wretched sin and divers
suffering*

**Tartareumque chos monstrabit
terra dehiscens**

*The erupting earth will burst open to reveal
the Chaos of Tartarus*

**Et coram hic domino reges
sistentur ad unum**

*And there, face to face with God, kings will
stand judged together*

**Decidet et celo ignis et sulphris
amnis.**

*A river of fire and sulphur will fall from the
heavens.*

(St Augustine, *City of God*, Book XVIII, Ch. 23, The Erythraean Sibyl's Acrostic.)

THE PROVENÇAL SIBYL:

Manuscript Musical Setting: Thirteenth Century

Aujatz, senhors, aquests sants dits	<i>Listen, oh people, to the holy words</i>
Que Sibilla retrai ditz	<i>That the Sibyl pronounced and said</i>
De l'Adveniment del Senhor	<i>About the coming of the Lord</i>
Al qual devem portar onor.	<i>To whom we are bound to give honour.</i>
Sibilla, tot apètament	<i>The Sibyl, very clearly</i>
Demostra'ns ol jutjament,	<i>Showed us the judgement</i>
Que Jesù farà de nos	<i>That Jesus will make of us</i>
Aissi com ausiretz vos tots;	<i>As you will all hear;</i>
Al jorn del judici	<i>At the Day of Judgement</i>
Parrà qui aurà fach servici.	<i>He who has given service will be rewarded.</i>
Un rei vendrà perpetual	<i>An Eternal King will come from Heaven</i>
Del cel, que anc no.n fo aital;	<i>The like of whom has never before existed;</i>
En carn vendrà . certanament.	<i>He will surely come in flesh.</i>
Per far del segle jutjament.	<i>To make judgement of the world.</i>
Maïs del judici tot enant	<i>But before the judgement</i>
Parrà une senha mout grand	<i>A very great sign will appear</i>
La tèrra gitarà susor	<i>The Earth will be bathed in sweat</i>
E tremerà di grand pavor	<i>And tremble with great fear.</i>
Un corn mout ressonarà	<i>A trumpet most sad will sound</i>
Del cel, que mout reissudarà;	<i>From Heaven, to wake mankind;</i>

La luna e.l solel s'escolizirà

The moon and sun will pale

Nula estèla non lusirà.

Not a star will shine.

Cascun còrs l'arma cobrarà

Every body will be joined to its soul

aquí parrà qui es bon o mal:

*And who is good and who is evil will be
apparent:*

los bons iran vèrs Dieu lai-sus,

The good will go towards God on High,

los mals iran en tèrra jus.

The evil will go beneath the earth.

Aquel Sénher que nos formèt

May the Lord who made us

e que de le Verge nasquèt,

And who was born of the Virgin,

nos garde de pecat mortals

Keep us from mortal sin

e de penas perpetuals.

And from perpetual pain.

Adoncs vendrà Dieu en sa majestat

*At the hour when God will come in his
Majesty*

Jutjar lo mond per veritat;

To judge the world in truth;

Adons veiran Dieu en la crotz

Then we will see God on the Cross

On morí per pecadors.

Where he died for sinners.

CATALAN SIBYL:

Manuscript Musical Setting: Renaissance

Al jorn del Judici

At the Day of Judgement

parrà qui haurà fet servici

He who has given service will be rewarded

Un rei vendrà perpetual

An Eternal King will come

vestit de nostra carn mortal;

Clothed in our mortal flesh;

del cel vindrà tot certament

From Heaven he will come most certainly

per fer del segle jutjament.

To make judgement of the present age.

Ans que el Judici no serà

Before Judgement is passed

un gran senyal se mostrarà:

A great sign will be shown:

lo sol perdrà lo resplendor,

The sun will lose its light,

la terra tremirà de por.

And the earth tremble with fear.

Après se badarà molt fort

Afterwards it will thunder mightily

amostrant-se de greu conhort;

To show great wrath;

mostrar-se han ab crits i trons

Showing with cries and lightning flashes,

les infernals confusions.

The chaos of Hell.

Del cel gran foc davallará,

From Heaven great fire will fall,

com a sofre molt pudirà;

With a great stink of sulphur;

la terra cremarà ab furor,

The earth will burn furiously,

la gent laurà molt gran terror.

The people will be greatly terrified.

Après serà un fort senyal

Afterwards will come a strong sign

d'un terratrèmol general;

Of a widespread earthquake;

les pedres per mig se rompran

The rocks are broken by force

i les muntanyes se fondran.

And the mountains founder.

Llavors ningú tindrà talent

At that hour no-one will keep a single piece

d'or, riqueses ni argent,

Of gold, riches or silver,

esperant tots quina serà

All awaiting what will be

La sentència que es darà.

The sentence given.

De morir seran tots sos talents,

Death will rob them of all riches,

esclafir-los han totes les dents;

Crushing them all utterly;

no hi haurà home que non plor,

None will remain who do not cry,

tot lo món serà en tristor.

All the world will be in grief.

Los puigs i plans seran iguals,

*The peaks and plains will be made the
same,*

allí seran los bons i mals,

To them will come the good and the evil,

reis, ducs, comtes i barons,

Kings, Dukes, Counts and Barons,

que de llurs fets retran raons.

Who must account for their deeds.

Après vindrà terriblement

After that will come awesomely

lo Fill de Déu omnipotent;

The Omnipotent Son of God;

de morts i vius judicarà:

To judge the quick and the dead:

qui bé haurà fet alli es parrà.

*Those who have done good will go to their
reward.*

Los infants qui nats no seran

Infants not yet born

dintre ses mares cridaran

Will cry within their mothers

I diran tots plorosament:

And say, full of tears:

“Ajuda’ns, Déu omnipotent”.

“Help us oh God Omnipotent”.

Mare de Déu, pregau per nós,

Mother of God, pray for us,

puix sóu mare de pecadors,

You who are mother of sinners,

que bona sentència hajam

That we may have a good judgement

i paradís posejam.

And paradise possess.

Vosaltres tots qui escoltau,

All of you who have heard everything,

devotament a Déu pregau

Pray earnestly to God

de cor ab gran devoció,

From your heart with the great devotion,

que us porte a salvació.

That carries us to salvation.

SOURCES

The liturgy of the Sibyl was a vehicle of popular religion, not patrician culture. The Latin Rite was celebrated in France, Castile (especially the Catalan region) and in Italy, at least from the tenth century. Vernacular versions were celebrated in France, in Provence and in the Catalan region where it has remained part of the active music tradition even to this day despite the ban imposed at the end of the sixteenth century after the Council of Trent’s reforms of the Catholic Church.⁴⁴⁷

Latin versions:

Latin versions: The Rite of the Sibyl is the earliest of the Catalan dramaturgy, the first musical version in Latin that we know of dates from the tenth century, it is preserved at

⁴⁴⁷ The popular Rite may have stimulated Giovanni Pisano’s interest in Sibyls, accounting for his very frequent use of the trope in sculpture in the thirteenth-century proto-renaissance. He may have seen the rite in his childhood in the South of Italy, once ruled by the Aragonese where Iberian influence penetrated the Church as much as all other aspects of the culture. Alternatively, he may have had contact with the rite during his sojourn in France.

Cordoba Cathedral and dates from about AD 960. There are manuscripts at Ripoll; Barcelona; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale Lectionarium and Montecassino, Lectionarium.

Vernacular versions

Vernacular versions are found from the thirteenth century at Montpellier (Lectionarium), the Escorial (Codex Principis) and at Toledo (manuscript).

Fifteenth-century manuscripts are found at Barcelona (Cathedral) and at Palma Majorca (Convents of the Conception and of Santa Margarita). It was at this time that the Sibylline verses began to be sung polyphonically and there are known versions at Tirana, (Seville, Biblioteca Colombina), Cordoba (Madrid, Palacio Nacional), an un-named location, preserved at Barcelona (Barcelona, Orféo catala); Baptista Carceres (Gandia, Collegiata); Alonso (Gandia, Collegiata) and at an un-named location the manuscript being preserved at Toledo (Toledo Cathedral).

Earliest extant Romance versions are all connected in some way with the Iberian peninsula. They date from beginning of the fifteenth century. In Catalan, we find *Constitutiones synodales ecclesie barchionensis* 1415. In Provençale there are two: (Montpellier, Arch. de l'Herault, MS. 58H6 and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, frç. 14973). None of the aforementioned, however, preserve the musical notation. The earliest surviving manuscripts which also have the music are found at Barcelona (MS 184b)

[A full bibliographical list is available in the C.D. recording of the Romance Rites by Jordi Savall (Astrée E8705) 1988.]

APPENDIX 8

**FILIPPO BARBIERI: EXTRACT CONCERNING
SIBYLS FROM HIS OPUSCULUM:
*DISCORDANTIAE NONNULLAE...***

APPENDIX 8: FILIPPO BARBIERI:

EXTRACT CONCERNING SIBYLS FROM HIS OPUSCULUM: *DISCORDANTIAE NONNULLAE...*

The Appearance and Oracles of the Barbieri Sibyls

The woodcut illustrations in the 1481 edition are without scrolls or text. The first words of the oracle are inscribed on scrolls in the new illustrations in the 1482 edition. The full version of the oracles and physical descriptions of the Sibyls are recorded in the text. Where the descriptions vary, I record both the 1481 and the 1482 versions, the latter as a footnote.⁴⁴⁸

Sibylla phrigia: *nata apud phrigios mediocris etatis habitu: et mantello rubeo in modum mulieris nupte licet virgo de Xristo sic dixit* ⁴⁴⁹ Flagellabit deus potentes terre: et olympo excelsus veniet: et firmabitur consilium in cello: et annunciabitur virgo in vallibus desertorum.

Sibylla europea: *decora iuvenis facie rutilans velo subtilissimo capite ligata induta veste aurea de xristo sic ait,*⁴⁵⁰ Veniet ille et transibit montes et colles: et lactices silvarum olimpi: regnabit in paupertate: et dominabitur in silentio: et egredietur de utero virginis.

Sibylla nobilissima erithea in *Babilonia orta: de xristo sic ait,* In ultima autem etate humiliabitur deus et humanabitur proles divina iungetur humanitati divinitas. Iacebit in feno agnus et officio puellari educabitur deus et homo. Signa precedent apud appellas. Mulier

⁴⁴⁸ I am wholly indebted to de Clercq for his copy of Barbieri's text relating to Sibyls, pp. 126-127. I have retained all idiosyncratic spelling and punctuation, but have altered the appearance of the text, giving a separate paragraph for each Sibyl and using bold print and italics to make the meaning and content clear, and to facilitate comparison with manuscript transcriptions of similar documents in this dissertation.

⁴⁴⁹ **Sibilla frigia** induta veste rubea nudis brachiis antiqua saturnine facie crinibus sparsis digito indicans Decens sic...

⁴⁵⁰ **Sibilla Europea** ... De Cristo ... latices silvarum olympi ...

vetustissima puerum previum concipiet. Boetes orbis mirabitur ducatum prestat ad ortum.⁴⁵¹

Sibylla samia *a Samo insula nudum ensem sub pedibus formosum pectus subtileque velimcapiti habens. Sic ait, Ecce veniet dives et nascetur de pauperula: et bestie terrarum adorabunt eum et dicent: laudate eum in atriis celorum.*

Sibylla cumana *que fuit tempore Tarquini prisci scripsit de xristo referente virgilio in libro bucolicorum, in hunc modum.*⁴⁵² Ultima cumei veni iam carminis actas Magnus ab integro seclorum nascitur ordo Iam redit et virgo redeunt saturnia regna. Iam nova progenies coelo demittitur alto. Tu modo nascenti puero: quo ferrea primum: Desinet: et toto surget gens aurea mundo Casta fave lucina tuus iam regnat appollo.

Sibylla hellespontica: in agro troiano nata vetula et antiqua veste rurali induta: ligato velo antiquo capito subgula circumvoluta usque ad scapulas quasi despectu: de qua scribit Heraclides. Dicens: De excelsis celorum habitaculo prospexit deus humiles suos. Et nascetur in diebus novissimis de virgine hebreæ: in cunabilis terre.⁴⁵³

Sibylla Persia *vestita veste aurea cum velo albo in capite. Dicens sic: Ecce bestia conculcaberis: et gignetur dominus in orbem terrarum: et gremium virginis erit salus gentium: et pedes eius in validitudine hominum.*

Sibylla Libica *ornata serto viridi et florum in capite: vestita pallio honesto: et non multum iuvenis. Sic ait, Ecce veniet dies et illuminabit dominus condensa tenebrarum et viventium tenebit illum in gremio virgo domina gentium: et regnabit in misericordia: et uterus matris eius erit statuta cunctorum.*

⁴⁵¹ Underlined sentences not found elsewhere.

⁴⁵² Fuit tempore Tarquini prisci ait de xristo hec teste Virgilio Magnus ab integro.

⁴⁵³ *Babitaculo* a scribal error for *habitaculo*.

Sibylla Delphica vestita veste nigra et capillis circumligatis capiti in manu cornu tenens et iuvenis que ante troiana bella viticiuata est de qua Crysippus ait. Nascetur propheta absque matris coitu ex virgine eius.

Sibylla emeria in Italia nata: *alias Chimica: vestita celestia veste deaurata capillis per scapulas sparsas et iuvenis: de qua Ennius ait.* In prima facie virginis: ascendit puella pulchra facie prplixa capillis: sedens super sedem stratam: dans ei ad comedendum vis proprium idest lac de coelo missum. ⁴⁵⁴

Sibylla tyburtina: quam Lactantius tyburtem vocat nomine abuneam: que tyburi colitur ut dea iuxta ripas amnis: in cuius gurgite simulachrum eius inventum dicitur: tenens in manulibrum hec de Xristo taliter prophetavit⁴⁵⁵ Nascetur xristus in bethleem: et annunciabitur in Nazareth rex. Tauro pacifico fundatore quietis O foelix illa mater cuius ubera illum lactabunt.

Sibylla Agrippa sic ait de xristo:⁴⁵⁶ Invisibile verbum palpabitur, et germinabit ut radix: et siccabitur ut folium: et non apparebit venustas eius, et circumdabitur alvus maternal: et flebit deus Leticia sempiterna: at ab homibus conculcabitur: et nascetur ex matre ut deus: et conversabitur ut peccator.

⁴⁵⁴ proluxa capillis: sedens super sedem stratam nutrit puerum: dans ei ad comedendum ius proprium.

⁴⁵⁵ *Sibyllae tiburtinae: non multum senex veste rubea induta desuper ad collum pellem hicinam per scapulas habens capillis discopertis simulacrum, tenebat librum ubi scriptum erat.* Nascetur xristus in betlehem et annunciabitur in Nazareth: regente tauro pacifico fundatore ...

⁴⁵⁶ *Sibilla Agrippa rosea veste cum clamide resca non multum iuvenis tenens in gremio quasi admirans et deorsum respiciens sic ait de Cristo ...*

**APPENDIX 9: TABLE TO SHOW ALLOCATION
OF ATTRIBUTES IN CYCLES INFLUENCED BY
THE BALDINI ICONOGRAPHY**

**TABLE TO SHOW ALLOCATION OF ATTRIBUTES IN
CYCLES INFLUENCED BY THE BALDINI ICONOGRAPHY**

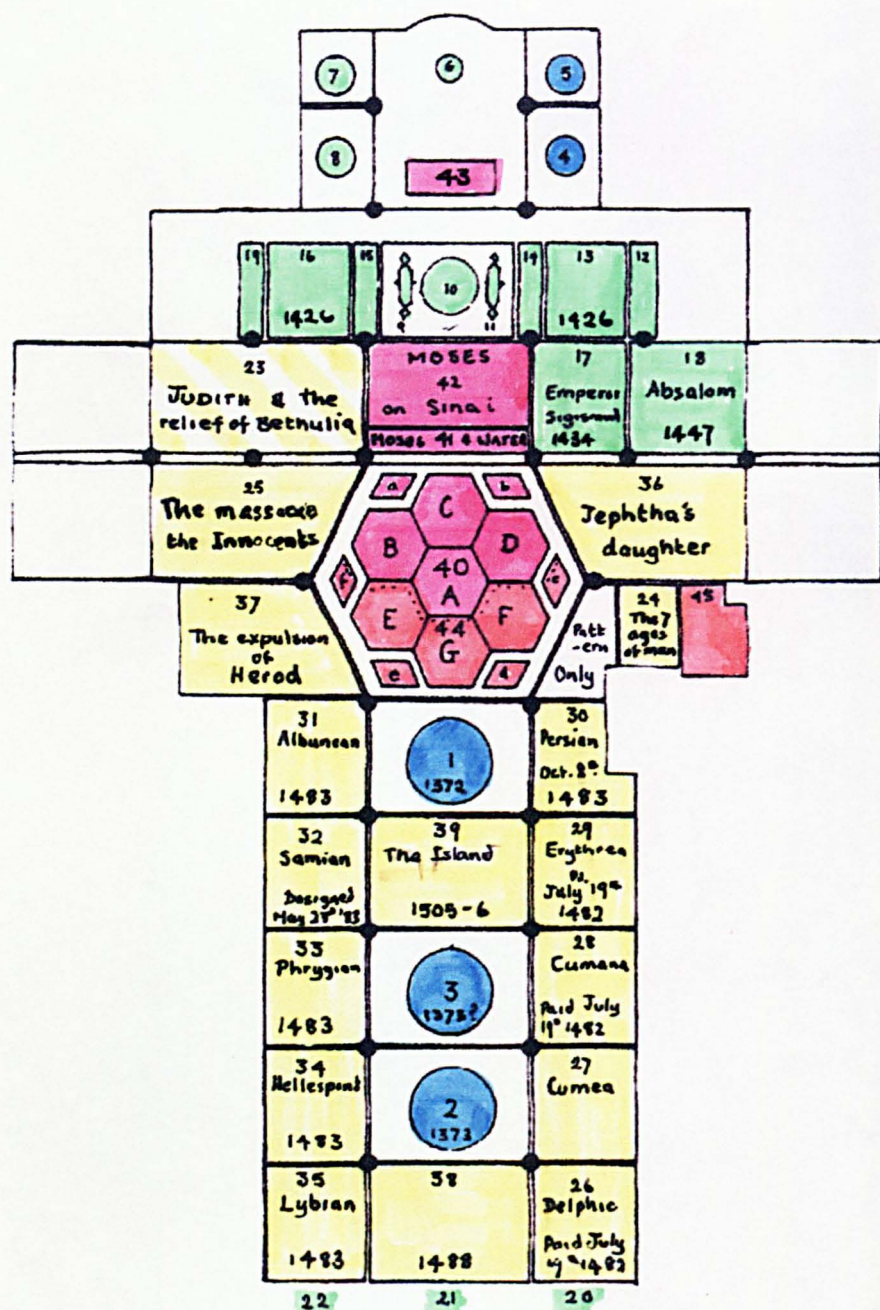
RIMINI 1454-5 Some attributes predate Baldini	BALDINI c. 1477 ATTRIBUT ES both editions	1481 BARBIERI WOODCU TS Series I	1482 BARBIERI Series II	1482-3 SIENA	Mid 1490s SALUZZO one of 4 unnamed sculptures	1507 SALUZZO Sibyl cycle.
Unnamed leafy wreath no plaits.	Libica: Head wreath; plaits;	x	Libica head wreath no plaits.	Libica: head wreath, plaits + snakes tripod		
Unnamed holds similar horn	Delphica: Horn	Delphica: Cornucopia vegetation. Description States short hair not in picture.	Delphica: Cornucopia filled with vegetation.	Delphica Cornucopia filled with vegetation or flames (?).		Del.: Horn close copy
	Chimica: Winged head dress	A l'antica: loose hair movement in wind.	A l'antica: loose hair movement in wind	(Chimica is Barbieri I version not Baldini.)		Some blurred indication of wings.
Unnamed gold knife in right hand	Eritrea: Nuns attire black veil and sword held erect in right hand.	Holds flat-ended scimitar	Holds sword erect in left hand, nun's attire & sandals pale veil.	See below: Erythraea is like the Hellespontica elsewhere.		Eritrea Naïve close rendering of whole Baldini figure
	Samia: sword laid down below her feet.	Holds chalice c.f. Tarot. No sword as text stipulates.	Windblown head-dress. She treads on a sword.	Windblown head-dress. No sword.		
Unnamed burning books.	Cumana: Bodice designed as armour; no books	Cumana is the only Sibyl in these woodcuts to have a book.	Cumana is the only Sibyl in these woodcuts to have a book.	Cumana, pile of books with faggots.		
	Hellespontica: a: Turban with under- chin ligature and hanging cloth at back.	Hellespontica a holds an incense burner.	Hellespontica a wears the Turban and under chin ligature. No back cloth.	Erythraea: A stilted version of turban, ligatures and hanging.	Un-named, very close rendering of Baldini	Hellespontica: Copy of Turban without the ligature. Red hanging.
	Frigia: Turkish hat turban base.	x	Strange double ponytail c.f. Bald. Europa	x		
	Tiburtine: Exotic helmet + animal skin.	(Tiburtine with Emperor Augustus's vision. No resemblance to Baldini)	(Tiburtine with Emperor Augustus's vision. No resemblance to Baldini)	Tiburtine: animal skin, exotic helmet; very close copy of Baldini.		Crude restoration has been drawn over original helmet?

The Baldini attributes are emboldened. In all other sites, attributes which appear nowhere else are embolened. The Baldini Persica, Europa and Agrippa have no particular attributes. Some of the elements at Rimini are included in the Baldini Engravings. The Barbieri I Persica carries a stick. Barbieri II Persica has two shields.

APPENDIX 10

THE CHRONOLOGY OF SIENA CATHEDRAL FLOOR AND THE ARTISTS RECORDED AS CONTRIBUTORS

CHRONOLOGICAL PLAN



KEY

14th. Century:

Initiated by Aringhieri, before
during & after his Rectorship:

15th. Century:

16th. Century:

19th. Century:

APPENDIX 10: THE CHRONOLOGY OF SIENA CATHEDRAL FLOOR AND THE ARTISTS RECORDED AS CONTRIBUTORS

CHRONOLOGICAL FLOOR PLAN WITH LISTED INVENTORY

no. 1	1372	Fortune's Wheel	(?)Domenico di Niccolò del Coro.
no. 2	1373	Confederate Cities in a Wheel	Anon.
no. 3	1373?	Imperial Eagle Wheel	Anon.
no. 4	1380	Temperance in a Wheel	Martino di Bartolommeo?
no. 5		Prudence in a Wheel	Martino di Bartolommeo?
no. 6	1406	Christian Piety in a Wheel	Martino di Bartolommeo?
no. 7		Justice in a Wheel	Martino di Bartolommeo?
no. 8		Fortitude in a Wheel	Martino di Bartolommeo?
no. 9	1423	Young David with his Sling	Domenico di Niccolò del Coro
no. 10		King David the Psalmist	Domenico di Niccolò del Coro. (Carli's attribution, Roberto Landi, writing in 1655, attributes it to Jacopo della Quercia, but Carli is convincing.)
no. 11		Goliath the Giant	Domenico di Niccolò del Coro.
no. 12	1424	Judas Maccabeus	Domenico di Niccolò del Coro.
no. 13	1426	Samson	Sassetta? Cartoon probably made by Paulo di Martino?
no. 14		Moses	Paulo di Martino? (Cust).
no. 15		Joshua	Paulo di Martino? (Cust).
no. 16		Joshua and the King of the Amorites	Sassetta? Cartoon probably made by Paulo di Martino

no. 17	1434	The Emperor Sigismund enthroned.	Designed by Domenico di Bartolo da Asciano. Cust says it was executed by Giacomo, or Jacopo, d'Antonio. Carli, interpreting the documents, thinks him to be only a manual labourer, who <i>helped</i> , not the artisan who made the marble floor.
no. 18	1447	The Story of Absalom	Pietro del Minella, Capomaestro of both Siena and Orvieto. Begun after 11 th .July in the Rectorship of Giovanni Borghesi.
no. 19		Solomon	Domenico di Niccolò del Coro.
no. 20	1448	A jar, originally labelled MEL (Honey), now labelled LACT (Milk)	Anon.
no. 21		Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican	Anon.
no. 22		A jar, similar to 20, originally labelled FEL, (Gall), now labelled MEL (Honey)	Anon.
no. 23	1473	The Relief Bethulia by Judith	Cust says it was designed by Urbano da Cortona or by Matteo di Giovanni Bartoli and executed by Antonio Federighi. Carli, however, avers it is the work of Francesco di Giorgio di Martini.
no. 24	1476	The Seven Ages of Man.	Antonio Federighi. Commissioned by Aringhieri.

1481- Aringhieri's Rectorship: Knight of Rhodes and Malta

	1498	[For the full details of dates and artists of the Sibyl panels, consult the Appendix: 'Siena Archival Material']	
no. 25.	1481	The Massacre of the Innocents	Matteo di Giovanni Bartoli
no. 26.	1482	The Delphic Sibyl	Giuliano di Biagio & Vito di Marco executed this Sibyl; (the designer is not known.)
no. 27.		The Cumaean Sibyl	No record extant.
no. 28.		The Cuman Sibyl	Giovanni di Stefano di Giovanni
no. 29.		The Erythraean Sibyl	Antonio Federighi
no. 30.	1483	The Persian Sibyl	Urbano di Pietro di Domenico
no. 31.		The Albunean Sibyl	Benvenuto di Giovanni del Guasta
no. 32.		The Samian Sibyl	Matteo di Giovanni Bartoli
no. 33.		The Phrygian Sibyl	Luigi di Ruggiero and Vito di Marco
no. 34.		The Hellespontine Sibyl	Neroccio di Benedetto Landi.
no. 35.		The Libyan Sibyl	Guidoccio (Cozzarelli)
no. 36.		The Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter	Carli thinks it a work of Neroccio.
no. 37.	1484	The Expulsion of Herod	Benvenuto Giovanni del Guasta.
no. 38.	1488	Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus	probably Giovanni di Stefano
no. 39.	1505-6	The Island of Wisdom and Fortune Allegory	Pinturicchio.
no. 40.	1518-24	The Story of Elijah:	Beccafumi

A: The Pact between Elijah

and Ahab to prove his God

by sacrifice

B: The sacrifice made by

Baal's priests.

C: Elijah's sacrifice.

D: The slaying of the Priests

of Baal.

a: Elijah tells Obadiah to

bring Ahab to him.

b: Obadiah brings Ahab to

Elijah

- | | | | |
|----------------|--------------|---|---|
| no. 41. | 1525 | Moses striking the rock | Beccafumi: designed 1524, executed 1525 |
| | | from which comes water. | |
| no. 42. | 1531 | The Story of Moses on Sinai | Beccafumi paid 30 August, 1531 |
| | 1532 | Baldassare Peruzzi, Capomaestro, moved the Choir and Altar to the | |
| | | east (the position they now occupy). Until that time, the great High Altar | |
| | | with Duccio's grand maestà stood in the centre of the cathedral under | |
| | | the cupola. Once it was removed, the whole floor area was the subject of | |
| | | redesign. | |
| no. 43. | 1544- | The Story of Abraham's | The last work of Beccafumi, 25 February, |
| | 6 | Sacrifice of Isaac with | 1547, Siennese dating, 1546 |
| | | decorative frieze. | |
| no. 44. | 1878 | The rest of the story of | This was designed by Carlo Amidei and |
| | | Elijah. | executed by Matteo Pini in 1780. |
| | | E: Ahab is mortally | However, it was considered |
| | | wounded in battle. | unsatisfactory and wore very badly. |
| | | F: Elijah prophesies the | Three ancient scenes of Parables , now |
| | | | not fitting with the overall scheme and |

death of Ahab.

G: Elijah is taken up to
Heaven in a fiery chariot.

c: Elijah is fed by ravens.

d: Elijah meets the widow.

e: Elijah resuscitates the
widow's son.

f: Elijah anoints Jehu King
of Israel.

themselves very worn, were also on this
section of the floor. In 1878 Professor
Alessandro Franchi prepared new
designs for the hexagons and lozenges.
These designs were executed by Professor
Leopold Maccari with the help of
sculptor, Antonio Radicchi.

no. 45.

The four theological virtues

The same artists as above designed and
executed these figures.

APPENDIX 11

SIENA FLOOR: ARCHIVAL MATERIAL TABLE

Compiled from the Archives of the City of Siena

and

their publication in Dott. Gaetano Milanesi. *Documenti per la Storia dell'Arte Senese* (Siena: Porri, 1854)

with

R. H. Hobart Cust, *The Pavement Masters of Siena* (London: George Bell, 1901)

SIBYL	ARCHIVAL SOURCE	DESIGNER	MAKER	PRICE
DELPHICA July 19 th 1482	1482. Luglio 19. Giuliano di Biagio, e Vito di Marco, scarpellini, deno avere a di 19 Luglio 1482 liri cinquecento settantanove e soldi x: sonno per un quadro di marmo o pavimento anno fatto in Duomo rincontro all'altare di S. Chalista, a quadrucci bianchi e neri, e fregi rossi, neri e bianchi e la Sibilla Delficha in mezzo campeggiata di nero. Archivio dell' Opera del Duomo di Siena. Libro Giallo delle tre Rose a 342 e 345.		Giuliano di Biagio, and Vito di Marco who was absent, working on another contract 1483-4, i.e. when the left-hand aisle was laid down.	£579 10 soldi 0c. (Probably also did the designs because this is a high cost, c.f. Sibilla Samia.)
CUMEA	NO RECORDS EXIST			
CUMANA July 19 th . 1482	1482, Luglio 19. Maestro Giovanni di maestro Stefano e compagni scharpellini, deno avere lire 697.9 2, sonno per uno quadro e pavimento an fatto in Duomo a rinpetto de la Madona antica a marmi bianchi, rossi e neri con la Sibilla in mezzo a tutte loro spese. Archivio dell' Opera del Duomo di Siena. Libro Giallo delle tre Rose, a 342 e 345. (I understand, "per uno quadro <u>e</u> pavimento," to convey that he made both the design <i>and</i> the marble pavement.)	Giovanni di Maestro Stefano di Giovanni and his pupils	Giovanni di Maestro Stefano di Giovanni and his pupils. He was the son of the famous painter more usually called "Sassetta". He himself was a sculptor of fame recommended to the Duke of Urbino in 1477. In 1481 he was a witness to the commission given by the Opera del Duomo to Urbano di Pietrao, Antonio Federighi, Vito di Marco and Luigi di Ruggiero known generally as 'l'Armellino', to execute the Sibyls on the Duomo Pavement.	£697 9 soldi. 2c..
ERYTHRAEA July 19 th . 1482	1482, Luglio 19. Maestro Antonio Federighi, maestro di pietra, de'avere lire 649.17, sono per braccia cento trentasse 13/16 d'uno quadro, o pavimento rincontro all' altare di Santo Antonio a marmi bianchi, rossi e neri. . Archivio dell' Opera del Duomo di Siena. Libro Giallo di tre Rose, a 342 e 345. . (I understand, "per uno quadro <u>o</u> pavimento," to convey that he made both the	Antonio Federighi	Antonio Federighi, teacher of Vito di Marco, one of the most eminent of the Sieneese masters.	£649 17s. 0c.

SIBYL	ARCHIVAL SOURCE	DESIGNER	MAKER	PRICE
	design <i>and</i> the marble pavement. 'o' being a clerical error for 'e' as witness the entry above for the Sibylla Cumana, and the price being expensive.			
PERSICA 8 th . October 1483	Whilst Urbano di Pietro da Cortona, Antonio Federighi, Vito da Marco and Luigi Ruggeiro (<i>l'Armellino</i>) were commissioned to execute these Sibyls on September 20 th . 1481: 1481 (see Archivio de' Contratti di Siena. Rogiti di Ser Giovanni di Daniello) Urbano was not paid for doing this till October 1483, which implies that there was a hiatus in laying the designs on the floor. See Cust, p. 42. "1483, 8 Ottobre. Mo. Urbano di Pietro scultore – die avere a di viij dottobre 1483, £ 605. 12 per br. 127 e mezzo di spazo in uno quadro a lavorato in duomo con una Sibilla rinpetto aluscio del chanpanile." Archivio dell' Opera del Duomo di Siena. Libro Giallo di tre Rose a 380.	Landi says that Urbano di Peitro di Cortona also designed this panel.	Urbano di Pietro di Domenica da Cortona	£605 12s. 0c.
ALBUNEA ? Design paid for 18 th . May 1483?	Benvenuto di Giovanni del Guasta was the designer in 1483 (1483 Archivio dell' Opera del Duomo di Siena. Libro Rosso d'un Leone ad annum a. 38) but does not reproduce it in stone. It is not known definitely who executed this. Giuliano di Biagio was in this year paid 41 lire and 15 soldi for the carriage of 9.310 lbs, of marble from Gierfalco for the Sibyl pavement near the Altar of the Shoemakers.) Archivio dell' Opera del Duomo di Siena. Libro Rosso d'un Leone ad annum a. 35.	Benvenuto di Giovanni del Guasta. Carli writes that Pecci (1752) says that del Guasta received two payments on the 18 th . Of May 1483, "per disegno di una Sibilla in duomo ne' pavimenti" but I have not yet traced the archival origin of this remark.	Giuliano di Bagio was paid for the carriage of marble for this side of the floor, so he and his assistants may have executed these five Sibyls. The sum paid was substantial. 'Giuliano di Bagio, scarpellino, ha lire quarantuna, soldi quindici per vettura di libre 9,310 di marmi rechatì da Gierfalco per li pavimenti di le Sibille verso lastare dei Calzolari.' Archivio dell' Opera del Duomo di Siena. Libro Rosso d'un Leone ad annum a. 35.	No separate record of payment for putting this onto the floor, other than that for the carriage of the marble, has been yet found by me.

SAMIA Design paid for: 23 rd . May 1483.	1483, Maggio 23. Matteo di Giovanni, dipentore a di 23 di Maggio lire 4. – sonno per disegno fè d'una Sibilla dinansi all'altare de'Calsolari. Archivio dell' Opera del Duomo di Siena. Libro Rosso d'un Leone. Debit e Credit a. 35-38.	Matteo di Giovanni Bartoli signed by him at the foot of the tablet and dated there, 1483.	See Sibylla Albunea	£4 0s. 0c. There is no immediate explanation for this very low fee.
PHRYGIA	No records found by me or others.	Cust says that tradition suggests Luigi di Ruggiero (l'Armellino) and Vito di Marco designed and executed this but there is no documentary evidence.	See Sibylla Albunea	
HELLESPON— TICA	Archivio dell' Opera del Duomo di Siena. Libro Rosso d'un Leone a 38. Cust gives this reference, I have not myself yet been able to find it, or what it says.	Neroccio di Benedetto Landi.	See Sibylla Albunea	No record.
LIBICA 1483	1483. Guidoccio (Cozzarelli) disegna la Sibilla avanti l'altare dei SS. Quattro Coronati. Tizio, <i>Hist. Sen.</i> , vol. vi. Cf. Also Archivio dell' Opera del Duomo di Siena. Libro Rosso d'un Leone. Debit. e Credit. a 35-38		See Sibylla Albunea	No fee given for the design but perhaps there was a standard fee for design only by a painter, perhaps the £4 0s. 0c. paid to Matteo di Giovanni Bartoli however, this is mere speculation. (It is possible that artists were valued so much less than sculptors)

APPENDIX 12

LIST OF THE DOCUMENTATION OF THE CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR OF THE CATHEDRAL FLOOR AT SIENA

APPENDIX 12: LIST OF THE DOCUMENTATION OF THE CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR OF THE CATHEDRAL FLOOR AT SIENA

This is not intended as an exhaustive list of all documentation concerning the Cathedral floor.⁴⁵⁷ A fuller list will be found in the Bibliography. The object here is to find out as much information as is recoverable about whether any panels were worn to the point of obliteration, and so to establish which, if any, were wholly or partly redesigned. Often descriptions of the floor were written in the enthusiasm generated by a recent restoration and rarely if ever is an account of the floor in its damaged state preserved. However, much may be learned from comparing the careful descriptions of the floor as it was after restoration in previous centuries with what now appears. This list mentions those documents that enable manifest discrepancies with what is now on the floor to be noted and the frequency and dates of restoration work to be identified.

Early Documentation of the Construction of the Floor

The first reference to work on the pavement appears in the Cathedral accounts, and refers to a payment to Maestri Antonio di Brunaccio, Sano di Marco and Francesco de ser Antonio, for '*Tarsie di marmo, porporelle e birichuocoli bianchi e rossi, pello spazzo di duomo.*' These were plainly payments for installing patterns on the floor in mosaic, but exactly where is not specified. Carli records that the following artisans were also retained by the cathedral to assist in works to the floor.⁴⁵⁸ Matteo di Bartolo, Nanni di Corsino, Sano di Matteo, Cluca di Cecco and Cecco di Giovanni in 1376, 1380, 1398, and 1405.

⁴⁵⁷ The works of reference cited here are in the city archives of Siena and many are cited in Enzo Carli, *Il Duomo di Siena*, (Genova: Sagep Editrice, 1979). See the select Bibliography for bibliographical details of all the works mentioned.

⁴⁵⁸ See Carli, p. 143.

The first reliable remaining piece of documentary evidence referring to a recognisable portion of pavement appears in the accounts of the Cathedral in its central archive: 13 March, 1406: “*Marchesse d’Adamo e compagni maestri di pietra da Como*” were paid “*per una rotta [ruota] anno fatto murare nello spazzo contra a la sagrestia.*”⁴⁵⁹

Thereafter records of payment are a powerful documentary source for dating different parts of the floor.⁴⁶⁰

Documents Relevant to the Condition of the Floor and its Restoration and Repair

[1481-2 Alberto Aringhieri as Rector had the right and left aisles paved with pictures of Sibyls.]

1482-1528: Sigismondo Tizio

Sigismondo Tizio, Historiarum Senensium.

Tizio was born in 1458, in Castiglione Fiorentino. In 1480 he studied jurisprudence at Perugia, after which he moved to Siena in 1482, the year the Sibyl floor was completed. He was encouraged to undertake the project of writing the *History of Siena*, first by Niccolò Borghese, in whose house he lived for three years after moving to the city, then by the Piccolomini family, who appointed him tutor to Alessandro, Giovanni and Pier Francesco Piccolomini. Cardinal Francesco Piccolomini, later to become Pope Pius III, was a particular patron. The *History* became his life’s work and continued until his death in 1528.

The *History* begun in 1482, the year before the Sibyl panels were completed, provides exact dates for many of the panels. His sources for these are not all currently known, but the general accuracy of the work, and its accord with the documents still accessible make one

⁴⁵⁹ See Carli, p.143.

⁴⁶⁰ See Appendices 10 & 11 for a full list of dates when the panels were first laid down and the artists concerned.

inclined to accept the dates he cites, since other evidence is now lacking. The exact publication date is uncertain, but it was printed and published in the first half of the sixteenth century, in ten volumes. It was not written in order of volume numbers. Clearly, volumes IV to X, which chronicle the years 1402-1528, are very interesting since they incorporate the evidence of living first-hand witnesses, or their children, and at times Tizio's own testimony.

**1372 novembris decima dies aedis sacrae maioris pavementum marmoreum
quod medium est, stratum fuit et fortunae rota cum hominibus.⁴⁶¹**

This is the first clear reference to a picture rather than a geometric design, and refers to the installation of the '*Wheel of Fortune*' panel, showing a wheel with human figures upon it.⁴⁶²

**1448. Pavimentum quoque marmoreum ante portas Templi Senensis trinis
scalis ascensis, e marmore sterni fecit. Abel quoque sacrificium, nec non
Publicanum et Phariseum designori duo insuper vascula, melle uno felle
altero plenis, e regione portarum extremarum notabili significazione
depromi, quoniam a summo et maximo Deo in hujus mundi ingressu ac
limine tum mala tum bona omnes sunt accepturi.⁴⁶³**

1448. The marble pavement in front of the Sienese Temple doors was made as well as the steps, also in marble, leading up to the three external sides of it. The sacrifice of Abel as well as the Publican and Pharisee, with two pictures with full vases or urns above them, one inscribed with the word 'melle' (honey), the other with 'felle' (gall) were made. From the area of the main doors I derive a special symbolic significance, seeing that, in this world, good as well as bad,

⁴⁶¹ 'November the tenth, because of its central position, a panel was made on the marble pavement of the sacred temple depicting the wheel of fortune with human figures on it.'

⁴⁶² See also Carli, p.143.

⁴⁶³ See also, Cust. *The Pavement Masters of Siena*, pp. 15-16.

entering through the doors, will all be accepted by the Most High and Almighty God.

It is obvious that Tizio was quite clear in his own mind that the pictures were not arbitrary and were intended to be 'read' by the observer as symbolic. His interpretation was that good and bad, bitter and sweet, sinner and righteous were all welcomed into the church by a gracious God. It is most likely that later generations realised that the iconography, including the vases full of bitter and sweet liquids to left and right were meant to be symbolic. Aringhieri would also realise this when he came to lay down the two aisles, to right and left as one enters through these doors, with Sibyls proclaiming bitter and sweet prophecies concerning the coming of Christ into this world.

1506, Bartolommeo Benvoglianti

Bartolommeo Benvoglianti, *De Urbis Senae origine et incremento*. [Place of publication publisher unknown].

Benvoglianti records that in the area underneath the cupola, '*ubi nunc est rota in medio pavimento*'.⁴⁶⁴ This was replaced between 1518 and 1524 by the four hexagons beginning the story of Elijah, by Beccafumi. It implies that there were early wheel designs which were taken up and replaced once the idea that complex narrative pictures of the great Biblical Sagas could be made.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁴ 'Here there is at present a wheel design in the middle of the pavement.' The use of the word *nunc* 'now' or 'at present', makes one wonder whether there were already plans to repave the area. Perhaps Aringhieri, the great instigator of the project to complete the floor with pictorial representations replacing the original wheel patterns, had left written plans for all the floor at the end of his period of office.

⁴⁶⁵ For detailed explication of the pictorial content and order of works, see the Appendix entitled 'Chronological Floor Plan with Listed Inventory', at the end of this dissertation.

1655 Alfonso Landi

Alfonso Landi, *Descrizione del pavimento del Duomo de Siena*, (Siena: [n. pub.], 1655) in Guglielmo della Valle, *Lettere senese sopra le velle arti*, III (Rome: [n. pub.], 1786), pp. 124-257. This published description derives from Landi's manuscript, *Racconto di pitture, di statue e d'altre opere eccellenti, che si ritrovato ne' templi e negli altri luoghi pubblici della città di Siena, comunicato fin dall'anno 1655* BCS, MS. L. IV. 14 FF. 177-248.

This work is very important to the present study, since it is a faithful and diligent account of the state, content and text of the pavement in the mid seventeenth century. He strives constantly for absolute accuracy, only recording that which he has seen for himself. It is consoling to the researcher, often thwarted by buildings being closed for restoration, or inaccessible because of human intransigence or material obstruction, to read Landi's careful record including passages which announce that he was unable to see particular sections of floor because of church furniture which was too heavy for him to move. This kind of almost diaristic detail gives assurance as to the honesty and accuracy of the rest of the account. Landi's description of the inscriptions '*fel*' and '*mel*' which appear on the pavement immediately outside the doors to the left and right aisles in the West façade, confirms Tizio's account of the original construction in 1448. Tizio would have seen these panels only thirty-four years after their construction. Landi's account confirms that there has been no slip of pen or vocabulary in Tizio. Tizio spells the words in a different way, '*felle*' and '*melle*'. It is unsafe to assume that these renderings were what actually appeared on the pavement. It must be remembered that in Tizio's day, the Latin in which he writes was a spoken language and was often spelled phonetically, and idiosyncratically by the individual writer, echoing local pronunciation. It did not have a standardised, scholarly, universal 'Classical' accuracy. It is likely that even if Tizio read '*fel*' and '*mel*' on the pavement, he would feel quite happy to render these the way he spoke, with the Italian soft 'e' sound at the end of short words ending abruptly, to preserve the rhythm of the language, as in his mother tongue. It is of course also entirely possible that the recent restoration Landi speaks of had corrected

unconventional spelling in the light of later Renaissance improved knowledge of Ciceronian Latin. The important thing to note, however, is that both writers attest that the words are *fel* and *mel*, 'gall' and 'honey', and understand that they have significant symbolic force. These are not the words inscribed on the pavement today.

It is clear that the 'recent', seventeenth-century restoration works to which Landi alludes, had not altered the wording on the external platform, either because sufficient remained of the original lettering to be clear as to what the words were, or because repairs had been done in the light of consultation with previous written records, Tizio, or others now lost. We can say therefore that the alteration in these words occurred either in the course of the eighteenth-century restorations or in the radical restoration of the whole pavement in the mid-nineteenth century.

1755

Giovanni Antonio Pecci, *Memorie Storico-critiche della città di Siena che servono alla vita civile di Pandolfo Petrucci dal MCCCCLXXX AD MDXII* (Siena: Carli, 1755)

Pecci says that the *Sibilla Albunea or Tiburtina* is by Benvenuto di Giovanni.⁴⁶⁶

This is a general history not a particular study of the floor, but does, in passing, make the remark above.

1784

Abbot Gioacchino Faluschi, in *Breve Relazione*, an edition of which exists dated 1784, refers to the state of the floor and its necessary restoration in 1777.

Questo simbolo della Fortuna, che qui fu posto fin dal 1506, senza essersi potuto mai retrovar l'artefice del disegno, e dell' intaglio, per esser molto

⁴⁶⁶ See Carli, p.150. See also Appendix 10: Chronology of Siena Cathedral Floor Plan and the Artists recorded as Contributors.

deteriorato, e per levar quella deformita, che redeva al pavimento una certa elevazione fu del tutto in simil guisa rifatto modernamente nel 1777.

This symbol of Fortune, was laid in place at the end of 1506. It was not without great effort made to recover the skill of the design and the intaglio work, because it was so much deteriorated, and to remove that deformity, which rendered the pavement uneven, that it was all entirely remade in similar form, in the modern manner in 1777.

Faluschi alluding to a, “*diformita, che rendeva al pavimento una certa elevazione*”, makes clear that a considerable restoration of the floor was necessary, probably because of earth movement from geological or architectural pressure.⁴⁶⁷ The additional weight of the dome might have added considerable stress and torque to the foundations of the building, which, over the course of time might have caused earth movement. It is not clear what other restoration works may have been effected at the time, but the deterioration in the pavement and the necessity for intervention is evident.

Romagnoli [Publisher, date and place of publication unknown but seeming to be late eighteenth or early nineteenth century] concerning the Panel of the Story of King David, avers that, ‘*nel 1777 tutte malamente ritoccate dallo scalpello di Matteo Pini Fiorentino, col disegno di Carlo Amidei*’.⁴⁶⁸ Clearly the late eighteenth-century restoration work was not universally admired.

1818

Anonymous account, *Descrizione del Duomo di Siena* [n. pub.].

Speaking of the area under the cupola, (c.f. 1506), it says, ‘*questa parte del pavimento... molto rilevata sopra il Livello del piano del Terreno*’. The book attributes this to movement of the subordinate earth structures. It alludes to the fact that the Rector,

⁴⁶⁷ ‘deformity, which gave the pavement a certain degree of uneven height.’

⁴⁶⁸ ‘In 1777 badly restored by the scalpel of Matteo Pini Fiorentino, to a design by Carlo Amidei’.

Giovanni Borghesi, had already (evidently in 1777) ordered the necessary restoration of this portion of the floor by the artisans, Matteo Pini and Giuseppe Gemignani. This was completed on 27 April, 1779.

Carli deduces that the present '*Wheel of Fortune*' panel is a copy of a seventeenth-century copy or at least that it is an original very much reinterpreted by 'restoration'.⁴⁶⁹ It is therefore extremely difficult to arrive at the initial appearance of the panel and so to establish the probable date. In this dissertation we are not so much concerned with the *Wheel of Fortune* panel, but with the Sibyls. However, the uneven state of the floor and the wear and tear on the panels is relevant in identifying the times and dates when restoration work became necessary and was carried out. The Sibyl panels and the external platform are not specifically mentioned as needing attention, so they may have been undisturbed in the eighteenth century. This would mean that panels immediately in front of the two doors most frequently used for entry, the *fel* and *mel* panels, would be very badly worn indeed, perhaps almost obliterated, by the time of the nineteenth-century cycle of radical repairs in the 1860s.

Gaetano Milanese, *Documenti per la storia dell'arte senese.*, 3 vols, (Siena, [n.pub.] 1854-56) *Sulla Storia dell'arte toscana*. Scritti Vari (Siena: [n. pub.], 1873) and *Discorso sulla Storia Artistica Senese*, (Siena:[n. pub.], 1873).

Milanese's invaluable cataloguing, collecting and printing of letters and legal and other documents is a rich source of confirmation of the points made in the documents here cited in detail.

1864-69

Ferdinando Rubini (Il Rettore), *Dei restauri eseguiti nella chiesa metropolitana di Siena dal luglio 1864 all' agosto 1869* (Siena, [n.pub.], 1869). Library of the Incoronati, Siena, catalogue reference: Miscellanea, de Arte Senese, II, C6 no. 7.

⁴⁶⁹ Carli, p. 144.

1869-79

Ferdinando Rubini (Il Rettore), *Dei restauri eseguiti nella chiesa metropolitana di Siena dal 1 settembre 1869 al 31 dicembre 1878* (Siena, [n. pub.], 1879?) Library of the Incoronati, Siena, catalogue reference: Miscellanea, de Arte Senese, II, C10 no. 2.

These accounts are detailed and important. Those who conducted the restoration had a care for accuracy and conservation and a detailed account was made of what was done was made by the then Rector. The work is not available in England, and since access is difficult and no English translation is available, I have translated the sections relating to the Sibyls and reproduced the accounts, in the accompanying Appendix 13.

There have been no further major restorations of the floor since the mid-nineteenth century, and much care has been exercised to ensure that none are necessary. Nowadays, large sections of the floor remain covered with a thick brown linoleum-like substance, in order to protect the work of art from the wear caused by greatly increased number of tourists. This is a necessary but unfortunate solution, since it means that the whole dramatic and brilliant surface of the floor is rarely seen except, by custom, at Easter.

1880

L. Mussini, *Il pavimento del Duomo di Siena e il professore Alessandro Franchi* (Florence: [n. pub.], 1880?). This is an important book giving a detailed account of the work of Franchi in the major nineteenth-century repairs.

1901

R.H. Hobart Cust, *The Pavement Masters of Siena 1369-1562* (London: Bell & Sons, 1901). This is one of the most thorough and detailed books on the subject of the floor, to which the present work is much in debt, as has been so often noted in the body of the text.

Enzo Carli, *Il Duomo di Sien*, (Genova: Sagep Editrice, 1979). Carli provides a brief history of the floor in the context of a general work on the whole Cathedral, and a most useful citation of textual sources.

From what is found in the documentary evidence and writings cited above, it is possible to give some account of restorations undertaken in the centuries between the creation of the floor and the present day. That gives some idea of how closely what we see today relates to the original state of the floor. It will be noted that after the restoration works in the mid-seventeenth century, approximately 180 years after the Sibyl panels were laid down, such repairs seems to have been necessary roughly once every hundred years, and were effected towards the last quarter of each century.

APPENDIX 13

THE OFFICIAL REPORTS ON THE TWO MAJOR NINETEENTH-CENTURY RESTORATIONS OF THE CATHEDRAL

APPENDIX 13: THE OFFICIAL REPORTS ON THE TWO MAJOR NINETEENTH-CENTURY RESTORATIONS OF THE CATHEDRAL

JULY 1864 – AUGUST 1869 AND
1 SEPTEMBER, 1869 – 31 DECEMBER, 1878.

The relevant sections dealing with the restoration of the floor, and the baptistery, which contains Aringhieri's portraits and whose design reflects his instructions.⁴⁷⁰

Report on the first phase:

THE RESTORATIONS OF THE METROPOLITAN CATHEDRAL OF SIENA JULY 1864 – AUGUST 1869

TO THE HONOURED COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SIENA

Introduction by the Rector, Cav. Ferdinando Rubini.

These few pages which refer to the restoration works carried out in the Metropolitan Church of this our City, and to the costs which were the responsibility of the Rector from the day on which he was honoured with the office, until today...⁴⁷¹ [*There follows a polite and laudatory introduction.*]

THE RESTORATION OF THE METROPOLITAN CHURCH OF SIENA JULY 1864 – AUGUST 1869

There are two principal categories of restoration works carried out in the last five years in the Sienese Cathedral: external restorations and internal restoration in the said Temple. The first were limited to the famous principal façade, renowned for all time; the second was mainly concerned with the pavement, which is perhaps the most singular feature of our Metropolitan Cathedral.

The restoration of the pavement proceeded very slowly and gently at the end of the year 1864, even though it was in the most terrible state in many places. The

⁴⁷⁰ Ferdinando Rubini, *Dei Restauri eseguiti nella Chiesa Metropolitana di Siena dal Luglio 1864 all'Agosto 1869* (Siena: Bargellini 1869). A report and the published accounts.

⁴⁷¹ Author's translation.

reason for this slow pace was the lack of means which, for such a kind of work, need to be vast. It was, without doubt, this lack of sufficient resources that inspired the late lamented Cavaliere Pietro Bambagini Galletti, my honoured predecessor, to one of those generous acts not infrequent in the history of our Sienese institutions. He left his patrimony to the Opera della Metropolitana, because that gift, the conservation of the famous Pavement was especially secured. Thus, the unassuming Pietro Bambagini, fully deserves public recognition of his life, and takes his place among the famous beneficent citizens of his birthplace. In brief, on the grave of this eminent man, his effigy, sculpted by the renowned Professor, Cavaliere Tito Sarrocchi, was placed together with a homage dedicated to the memory of all the benefactors who gave to the ordinary income of the Cathedral Works.⁴⁷²

There follows an account of the raising of further funds for the renovation of the front façade, and of which individuals and institutions contributed. There is also a record of the fact that a decision was taken to restore the façade to its structure and appearance in the first years of Sienese independence.⁴⁷³ The report also records that this move lacked the agreement of the Provincial Council of Siena. Not approving of the allocation of funds, it sought to overrule the decisions of the conservators. Eventually, grudging permission seems to have been given.

There follow details of the two architects who had charge of the restoration of the central part of the façade. The first was Prof. Lorenzo Doveri, the man who for many years had been the superintendent of the Metropolitan works, but who died in 1866. He was

⁴⁷² (Rubini's footnote.) Cavaliere Bambagini was buried by decree of the Commune, in the Duomo next to the Chapel of St John, where, of old, the graves of the Rectors of the Opera del Duomo were placed. The works preparing for the fixing of the bust not being complete at the moment, this most beautiful work of the sculptor Sarrocchi is displayed in the Library.

⁴⁷³ This may have meant the removal of what were considered to be later accretions.

succeeded by Prof. Cavaliere Giuseppe Partini. The report records the foundation of the Artistic Commission of the Duomo. With the coming of the Commissione Conservatrice dei Monumenti di Belle Arti, a separate commission for the cathedral was no longer useful and it ceased to exist. The artist concerned with the renovation of the mosaics and sculptures was Prof. Cav. Tito Sarrocchi who had renovated Giacomo della Quercia's Fonte Gaia, assisted by Sig. Leopoldo Maccari. Also involved were the 'scalpelini' Antonio and Giuseppe Radicchi and the masons, Luigi and Emiliano Ceccarelli. The translation is mine.

III

The Pavement of our Metropolitan Cathedral, reputed to be not rare but unique, was my greatest concern, as soon as I took office as Rector. I have already spoken of the lack of means, which, without any other cause, impeded the restoration that needed to be undertaken with alacrity. The manner in which we worked meanwhile on a part of the floor already restored, vitiated some of the previous restoration work.

The date that the new restoration work began was December, 1864. In less than five years the work on the whole of the pavement from the part in front of the façade to the cupola was brought to completion. The work began on only two pictures. The first picture to which hand was laid, was that commonly known as the Ruota, the Wheel of Fortune. On the first of July, 1865, work started on the other picture, in the middle of the nave, called the Mosaici, (Mosaics). It is the one which shows eleven city shields, surrounding a space where a symbolic wolf represents the city of Siena. The names of the cities one reads are as follows: Rome, Orvieto, Perugia, Pisa, Viterbo, Arezzo, Florence, Pistoia, Grosseto, Massa and Volterra. The renovation of this picture, which has a historic, as well as artistic importance, cost eight thousand nine hundred Lire. Much praise came to Signor Leopoldo Maccari, elsewhere recorded, for the diligence and delicacy with which he proceeded with this great mosaic. This mosaic occupied the major part in the report of the visit to the restoration work

in the Duomo made in June, 1866, by a Commission elected by the Società Senese di Storia Patria. I am pleased to refer to these words which may be read therein:

The ancient work, although spoiled by time and modern restorations, seems never before to have been so esteemed for beauty. It has never before had the delicacy which Maccari's restoration has given to it by employing modern methods. The ancient work was chiefly of a very minor artificer. The tesserae less exact and square, were rather cubes; but Sig. Maccari has given them the true form of little wedges. Much stone was used before, now, little but better cut, now the work will be more solid and durable.⁴⁷⁴

The restoration of the most valuable picture is not yet completed; that is, the work that is referred to as Trimegistus, [sic] which is next to the main door of the Church.

The restoration of the pictures in the side aisles was started on 1 October, 1855, and continued until about the middle of the following year. Thus, in four years the three aforementioned pictures were finished, and the other ten where that number of Sibyls are represented. Their names are reported in order in the third illustration.

The monies which were necessary for the renovation of all parts of this famous floor, amounted to about forty thousand Lire, and came to more than gift of the estate of Cav. Bambagini, my worthy predecessor. Like the work on the mosaic, that on the intaglio was done by the aforementioned, Sig. Leopoldo Macari. Antonio and Giuseppe Radicchi, most expert scalpillini, worked with their customary diligence and with that love of art, of which they have given continual proof in these restoration works.

⁴⁷⁴ The report was written by Dott. Carlo Francesco Carpellini.

*To the same Sig. Maccare is accorded the merit of having drawn up all the designs of the internal pavement. This valuable collection, now acquired by the Opera Metropolitana, will be immensely useful for the important restoration work that remains to be done. It will also serve in the compilation of an album with photographs and illustrations, which, if affection for this splendid monument of Sienese art does not lead me astray, will prove to be a most valuable work. It is to be hoped that because with praiseworthy invention a similar illustrated volume on the new Fonte Gaia was produced, expressing the love of art in its own region a similar inspiration will inform the work illustrating the designs of the Cathedral pavement, where prestige and the beauty of art have not perhaps been sufficiently recognised and studied in the past.*⁴⁷⁵

IV

The restoration of the Chapel of St John was of minor account in terms of the cost, if not in terms of advantage, if regarded from the point of view of art. In May, 1865, it was squalid and neglected, used as a tool cupboard by the cathedral workers.

There follows an account of its restoration.

The Giacomo della Quercia font was backed up against the wall so that a third of it was invisible. Fortunately the sculpture had not been damaged. The top fresco on the right was totally lost and a new fresco painted by the young graduate of the Sienese Arts Academy, Sig. Cesare Maccari. It was a picture of St John, out of prison and inviting his companions to follow Jesus Christ. Giuseppe Radicchi restored the marble of the pavement and the mural in the Chapel, as also the window with the arms of the Cathedral. The firm of Francini

⁴⁷⁵ If this volume were made, I have been unable to identify it, neither have I seen reference made to it.

Descrizione dei Lavori e delle Spese per il restauro del Pavimento.

IMPORTARE DEI LAVORI										TOTALE		OSSERVAZIONI
DI CULTORE		DI SCALPELLINO		DI MURATORE								
Navata di mezzo.												
Ricostruzione del Quadrato detto della <i>Ruota</i>	241	64	4838	74	311	60	2491	98				
Idem del Quadrato detto dei <i>Mosaici</i> , ove sono rappresentati gli stemmi delle Città confederate colla repubblica di Siena	290	00	4944	46	696	32	8900	48				
Idem del Quadrato detto del <i>Trimegistus</i> , compresa la soglia della porta principale	453	51	2820	37	429	42	3403	30				
Navata laterale dalla parte dell' Episcopo.												
Ricostruzione del Quadrato detto della <i>Sibilla Libica</i>	278	97	4552	79	520	40	2352	46				
Idem del Quadrato detto della <i>Sibilla Frigia</i>	409	27	4459	98	524	66	2133	91				
Idem del Quadrato detto della <i>Sibilla Ellespontica</i>	118	56	4463	33	529	58	2411	47				
Idem del Quadrato detto della <i>Sibilla Santa</i>	44	98	4935	94	673	60	2654	52				
Idem del Quadrato detto della <i>Sibilla Albunea</i>	44	98	4801	72	302	65	2149	35				
Navata laterale dalla parte del Campanile.												
Ricostruzione del Quadrato detto della <i>Sibilla Deiphica</i>	233	00	4784	47	273	70	2311	47				
Idem del Quadrato detto della <i>Sibilla Cumea</i>	233	00	2006	70	292	40	2381	80				
Idem del Quadrato detto della <i>Sibilla Cumana</i>	230	00	2151	46	351	90	2743	06				
Idem del Quadrato detto della <i>Sibilla Erirhaea</i>	154	00	1590	43	299	00	2043	13				
Idem del Quadrato detto della <i>Sibilla Persica</i>	230	00	2319	24	544	60	3153	84				
Idem del Pavimento compreso tra gli sguauci della porta laterale	—	—	265	45	46	00	314	45				
— <i>Somme</i>	5174	94	27974	18	5825	53	39971	62				
Assito di legname per la navata di mezzo; lavoro di fabbro o falegname							£ 985	50				
— <i>Totale</i>							£ 40957	12				

of Florence made the other new window to the designs of Sig. De Matteis. Carlo Maffei effected the gilding of the stucco. These restorations took a year and cost something like five hundred and fifty Lire.

There follows a brief account of the Rector's hopes for further restoration projects. The first is the restoration of the Capella del Voto. Funds were donated by the Festa della Dominica in Albis, at the suggestion of the Rector. These were not quite sufficient and Prince Chigi of Rome, in the name of the Duomo Artistic Commission, donated five hundred Lire to make up the deficit.

The Rector announces his hope of founding a gallery in the basement to display the ancient works of sculpture removed from the façade and the Fonte Gaia.

There follow thanks for support to the City Governor, the Ministry of Public Instruction, the Ministry of Justice and the Monte dei Paschi Bank.

The report is dated 10 August, 1869. The accounts for the works are appended.

The photocopy of the section showing the accounts for the works to the pavement is here attached.

A PRÉCIS OF THE REPORT ON THE SECOND PHASE OF RESTORATION:

1 SEPTEMBER, 1869 – 31 DECEMBER, 1878

This phase is not so important for the purposes of this study of the Sibyl Trope in Italy, since the Sibyl Cycle on the floor of the nave was restored in the first phase of this programme of restoration. However the accounts identifying the works and costs of the restoration of the rest of the floor are printed here for the sake of completion and the convenience of any who are interested in the floor as a whole.

I

Section I of the report addresses fund raising.

II

Section II of the report gives an account of the restoration of the rest of the floor. The first task addressed was to restore the area outside the Chapel of the Madonna also known as the *Capella del Voto*. In 1447 Antonio Federighi made the representation of the *Seven Ages of Man*. These were restored with great care by the sculptor, Leopold Maccari, aided by the ‘scalpelino’ Giuseppe Radicchi, ‘*young and full of intelligence and empathy with works of art who died too early, snatched from life, whilst attending, with the praise of all intelligent observers, to the restoration.*’ The accounts note a donation to his widow. Above these were placed four allegorical figures: Faith, Hope, Charity and Religion. The report states that these were crude and the presumption is that they were not assumed to be by Federighi. These were removed and Professor Alessandro Franchi was commissioned to produce alternative designs.

The second task was the completion of the hexagon under the cupola. This was begun by Domenico Beccafumi, also known by the soubriquet *Mecherino*, in the fifteenth century. However, at that time, the High Altar was situated under the dome, covering the area of the rest of the great hexagon, so it was not necessary for Beccafumi to cover that part of the floor with pictorial designs. Soon afterwards the altar was moved to the east wall but the hexagon was never completed. The report declares that in this series of restorations Professor Alessandro Franchi prepared new designs for the remaining hexagons and lozenges that were

constituent parts of the great hexagon under the cupola. These designs were executed by Professor Leopold Maccari.

III

More works were undertaken in relation to the façade. The report gives a detailed account of these.

The report is signed by its author, the Rector, Ferdinando Rubini, in Siena on 10 March, 1879.

See Attached photocopies of the Accounts for these restorations.

per il restauro del Pavimento.

IMPORTARE DEL LAVORO										IMPORTARE	
DI SCALPELLINO		DI SCULTORE		DI MURATORE		DI FALEGNAME		SPESE DI DISEGNI E DIVERSE		TOTALE	
81											
4490	50	1292	96	303	60	•	•	•	•	6087	06
9145	00	5543	50	572	70	56	00	850	00	16167	20
2232	88	284	00	147	20	•	•	•	•	2664	08
573	53	•	•	42	96	•	•	•	•	616	49
947	58	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	947	58
937	05	19	00	253	00	•	•	•	•	1209	05
1118	68	78	00	61	80	•	•	•	•	1258	48
2422	38	892	74	25	00	•	•	150	00	3490	12
22742	17	16796	67	424	06	5	50	3630	00	43598	40
1197	00	292	00	238	32	1647	29	211	35	3952	23
45806	77	25198	87	2068	64	1708	79	4841	35		
									£	79990	69
									£	3000	00
									£	2362	50
									£	1386	66
Totale . £										86739	85

APPENDIX 14

SEQUENTIAL ORDER OF THE SIBYL PANELS IN THE PAVEMENT

EXISTING ORDER OF PAVEMENT

<p style="text-align: center;">ALBUNIAN</p> <p>Christ shall be born in Bethlehem. He shall be announced in Nazareth, the peaceful Taurus being in the ascendant, the founder of peace. O happy mother, whose breast shall give him milk.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WHEEL OF FORTUNE</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PERSIAN</p> <p>With five loaves and two fishes He will satisfy the hunger of five thousand men on the grass. Taking up the remains, He will fill twelve baskets, for the hope of many.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SAMIAN</p> <p>For thou, foolish Judea! hast not known thy God, shining in the minds of men. But thou hast both crowned him with thorns and hast mixed for him nauseous gall.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">TEMPEST PICTURE</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ERYTHRAEAN</p> <p>From the higher habitation of Heaven, God has looked down on His humble people and shall be born in the most recent days of a Hebrew virgin in the cradle of the earth.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">PHRYGIAN</p> <p>"I am the only God and there is no other God." The trumpet shall utter from Heaven a mournful sound. Yawning earth shall expose Tartarean chaos. All things shall come before the tribunal of God: God himself judging the evil and the good together. Then at length He will send the wicked into fire and darkness. But whosoever will keep righteousness shall live again.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WHEEL OF THE EAGLE</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CUMANA</p> <p>Now has come the last period of Cumaean song. A great order of the ages is born afresh. The Virgin now returns. The kingdoms of Saturn return. Now a new progeny is sent down from lofty Heaven.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">HELLESPONTINE</p> <p>For food gall, in his thirst they gave him vinegar, they will show this table of inhospitality. The veil of the temple shall indeed be rent, and at midday there shall be black night for three hours.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WHEEL OF CONFEDERATE CITIES</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CUMEA (CIMMERIAN)</p> <p>He shall accomplish the fate of death, having undergone a sleep of three days. Then being returned from the dead, He shall come into the light, showing the first beginning of the resurrection.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">LIBYAN</p> <p>"Receiving buffets he will be silent. To blows he will give his innocent back." He shall come to unjust hands. With impure hands they shall give stripes to God. He, miserable and in ignominy, will give hope to the miserable.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">HERMES TRISMEGISTUS</p> <p>"Take up thy letters and laws, O Egyptians." The Lord and Creator of all things who made the second God visible, and since, therefore He made Him first, and alone, one only, delightful, He strongly loved him as His own Son, who is called the Holy Word.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DELPHIC</p> <p>Know thy God himself, who is the Son of God.</p>

SPECULATIVE ORDER OF PAVEMENT

<p style="text-align: center;">HELLESPONTINE</p> <p>For food gall, in his thirst they gave him vinegar, they will show this table of inhospitality. The veil of the temple shall indeed be rent, and at midday there shall be black night for three hours.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THEME: FOOD</p> <p>On the left corrupt wine and death, on the right sustenance and the hope of eternal life. These oracles are directly before the altar, at which bread and wine are consecrated.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PERSIAN</p> <p>With five loaves and two fishes He will satisfy the hunger of five thousand men on the grass. Taking up the remains, He will fill twelve baskets, for the hope of many.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">LIBYAN</p> <p>"Receiving buffets he will be silent. To blows he will give his innocent back." He shall come to unjust hands. With impure hands they shall give stripes to God. He, miserable and in ignominy, will give hope to the miserable.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THEME: DEATH AND BIRTH, VIOLENCE AND PEACE</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ALBUNEAN</p> <p>Christ shall be born in Bethlehem. He shall be announced in Nazareth, the peaceful Taurus being in the ascendant, the founder of peace. O happy mother, whose breast shall give him milk</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">CUMEA (CIMMERIAN)</p> <p>He shall accomplish the fate of death, having undergone a sleep of three days. Then being returned from the dead, he shall come into the light, showing the first beginning of the resurrection.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THEME: HELL AND HEAVEN</p> <p>Death and the descent into Hell on the left and Birth and the perspective from Heaven on the right.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ERYTHRAEAN</p> <p>From the higher habitation of Heaven, God has looked down on His humble people and shall be born in the most recent days of a Hebrew virgin in the cradle of the earth.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">PHRYGIAN</p> <p>"I am the only God and there is no other God." The trumpet shall utter from Heaven a mournful sound. Yawning earth shall show Tartarean chaos. All things shall come before the tribunal of God. God himself judging the evil and the good together. Then at length He will send the wicked into fire and darkness. But whosoever will keep righteousness shall live again.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THEME: MUSIC & JUDGEMENT</p> <p>The trumpet of Judgement at the end of the World on the left and the Song of Salvation at the foundation of the new Age on the right</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CUMANA</p> <p>Now has come the last period of Cumaean song. A great order of the ages is born afresh. The Virgin now returns. The kingdoms of Saturn return. Now a new progeny is sent down from lofty Heaven.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SAMIAN</p> <p>For thou, foolish Judea! hast not known thy God, shining in the minds of men. But thou hast both crowned him with thorns and hast mixed for him nauseous gall.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THEME: KNOWLEDGE</p> <p>The central Trismegistus panel reads, "Take up thy letters and laws, O Egyptians." The Lord and Creator of all things who made the second God visible, and since, therefore He made Him first, and alone, one only, delightful, He strongly loved him as His own Son, who is called the Holy Word."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DELPHIC</p> <p>Know thy God himself, who is the Son of God.</p>

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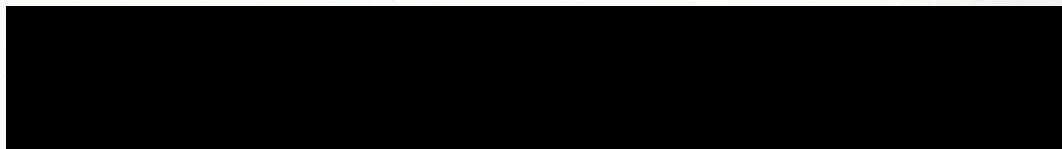
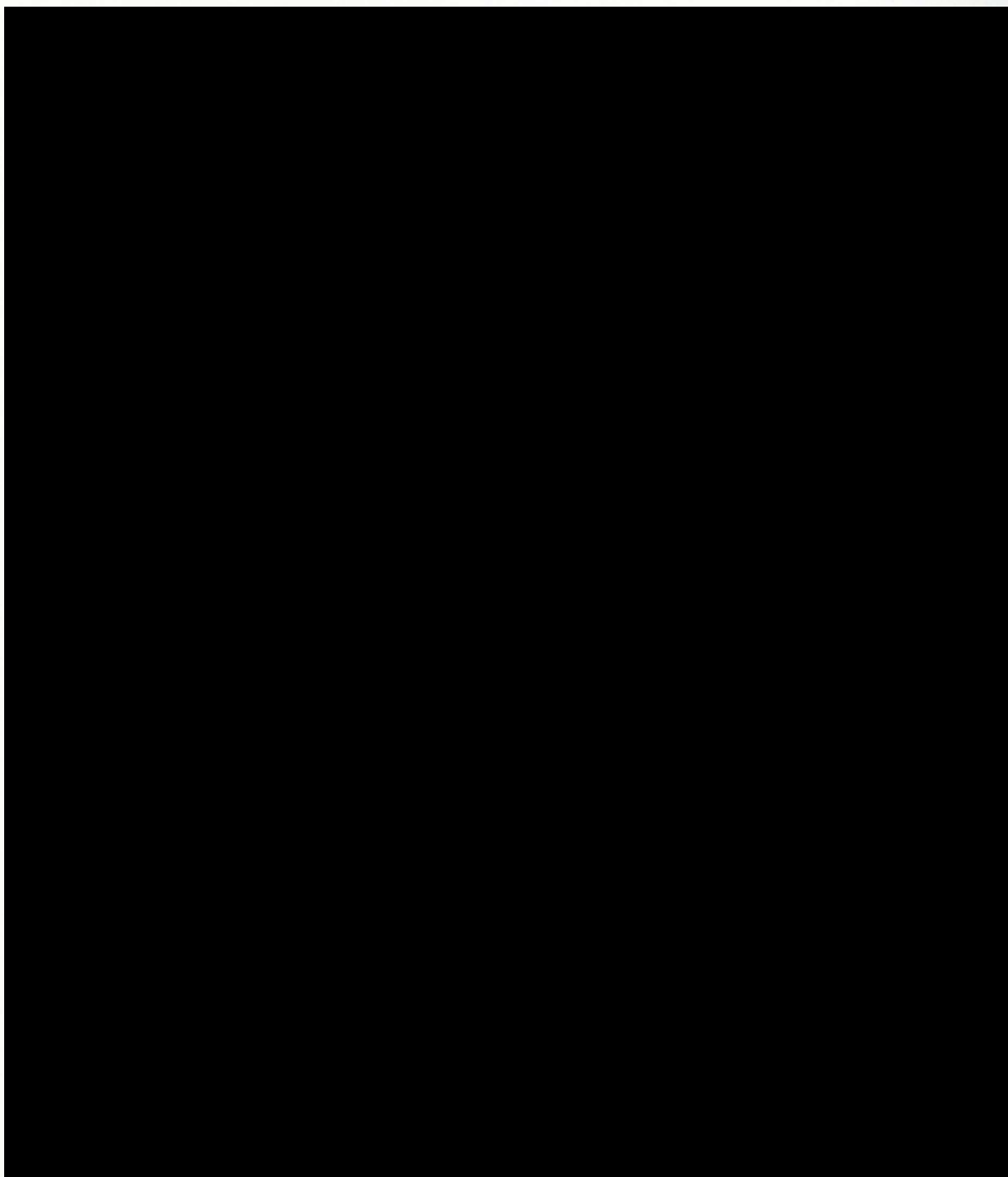
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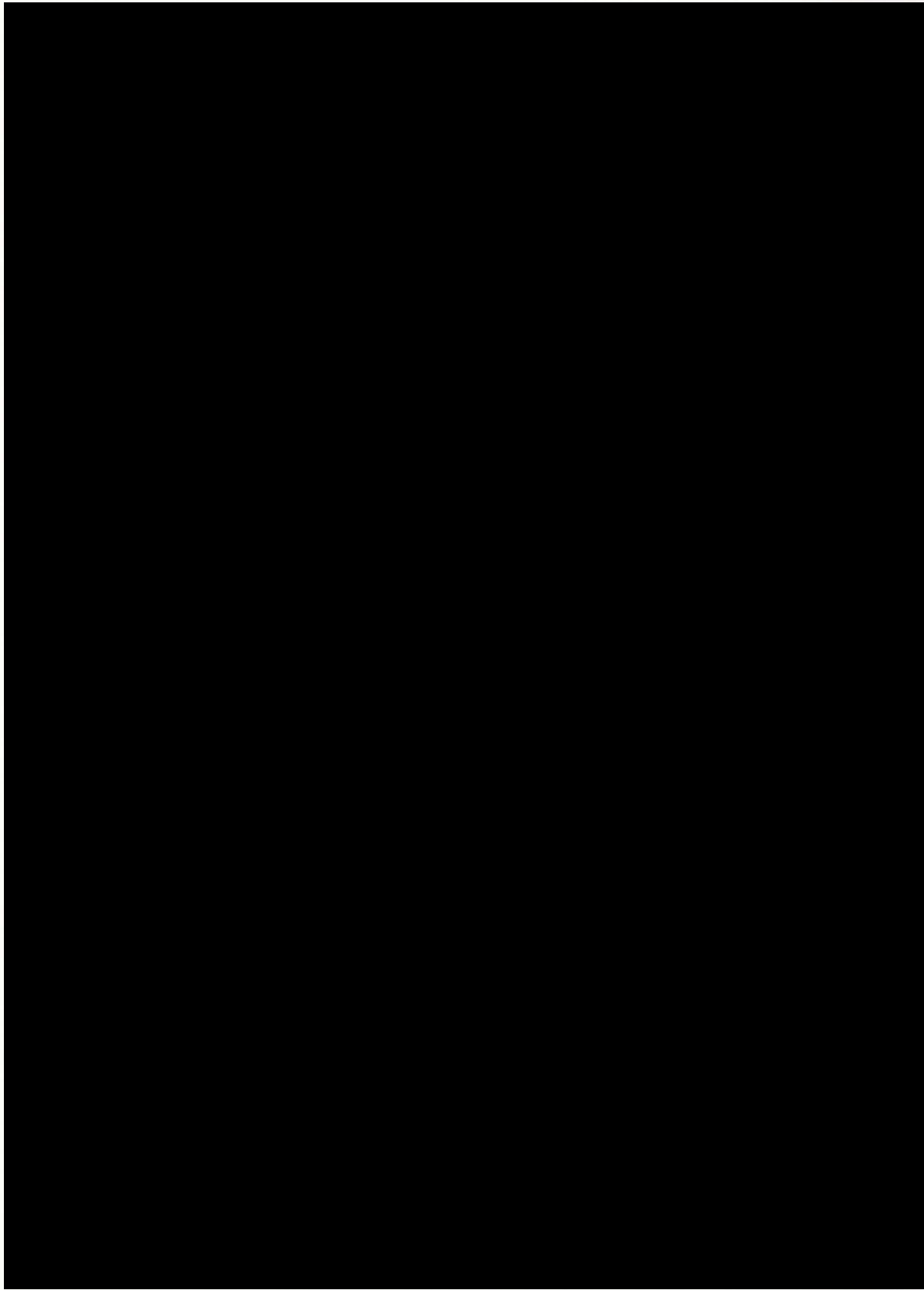
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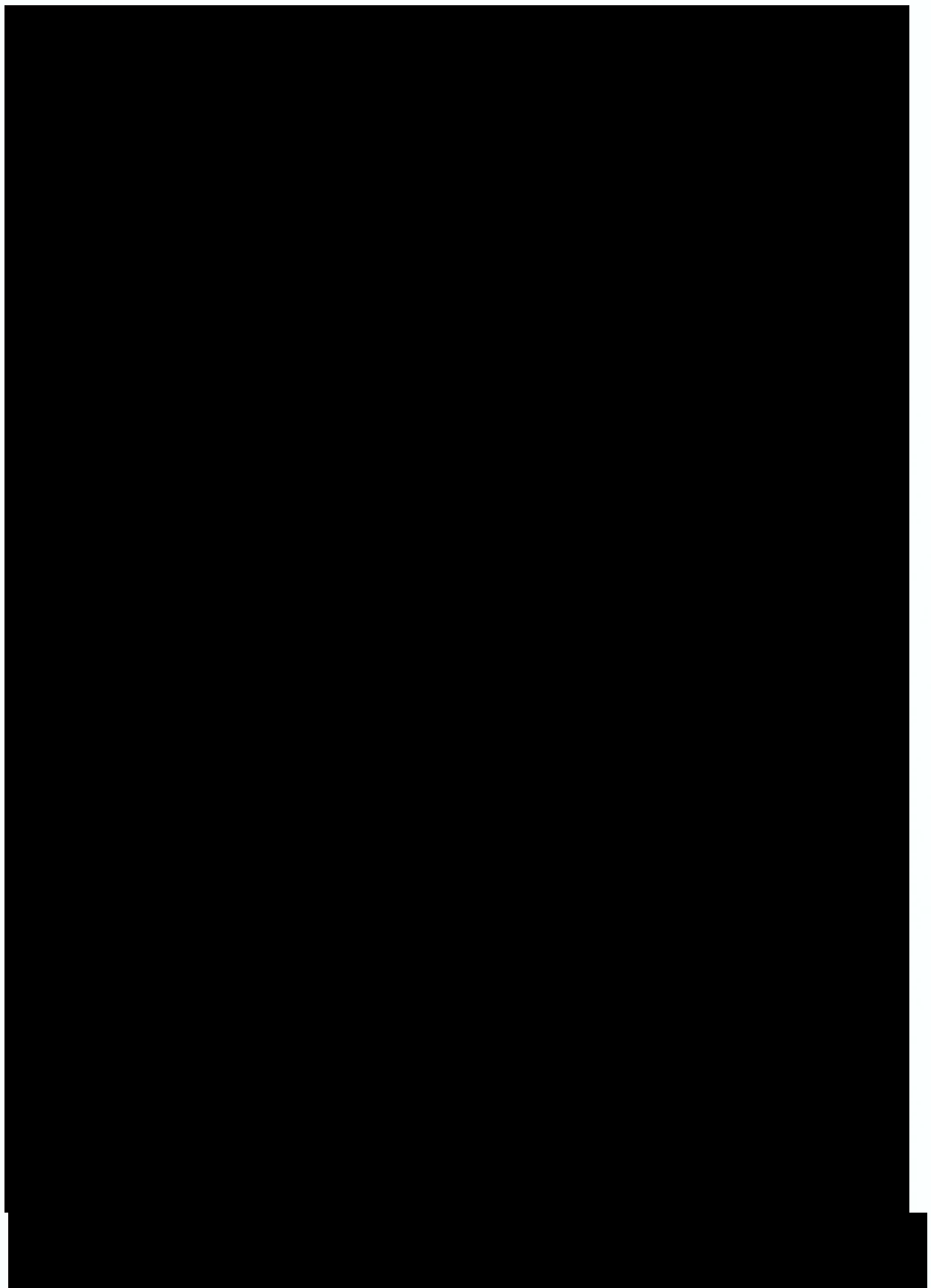
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